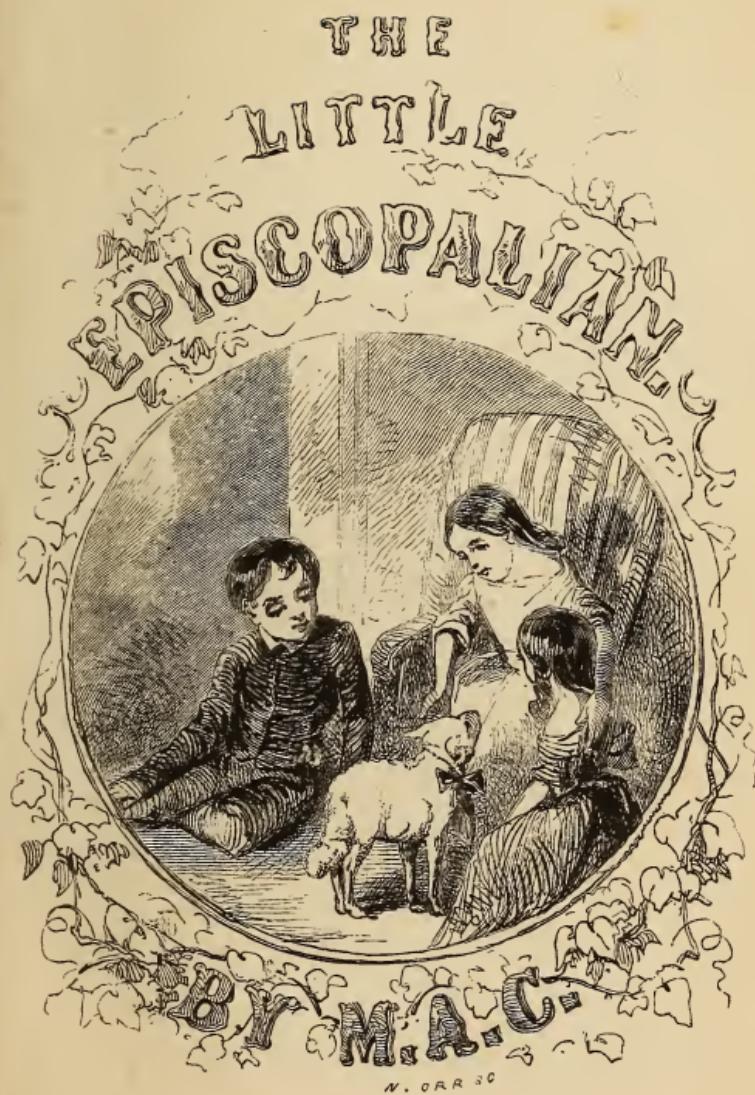




—P. O. & S.

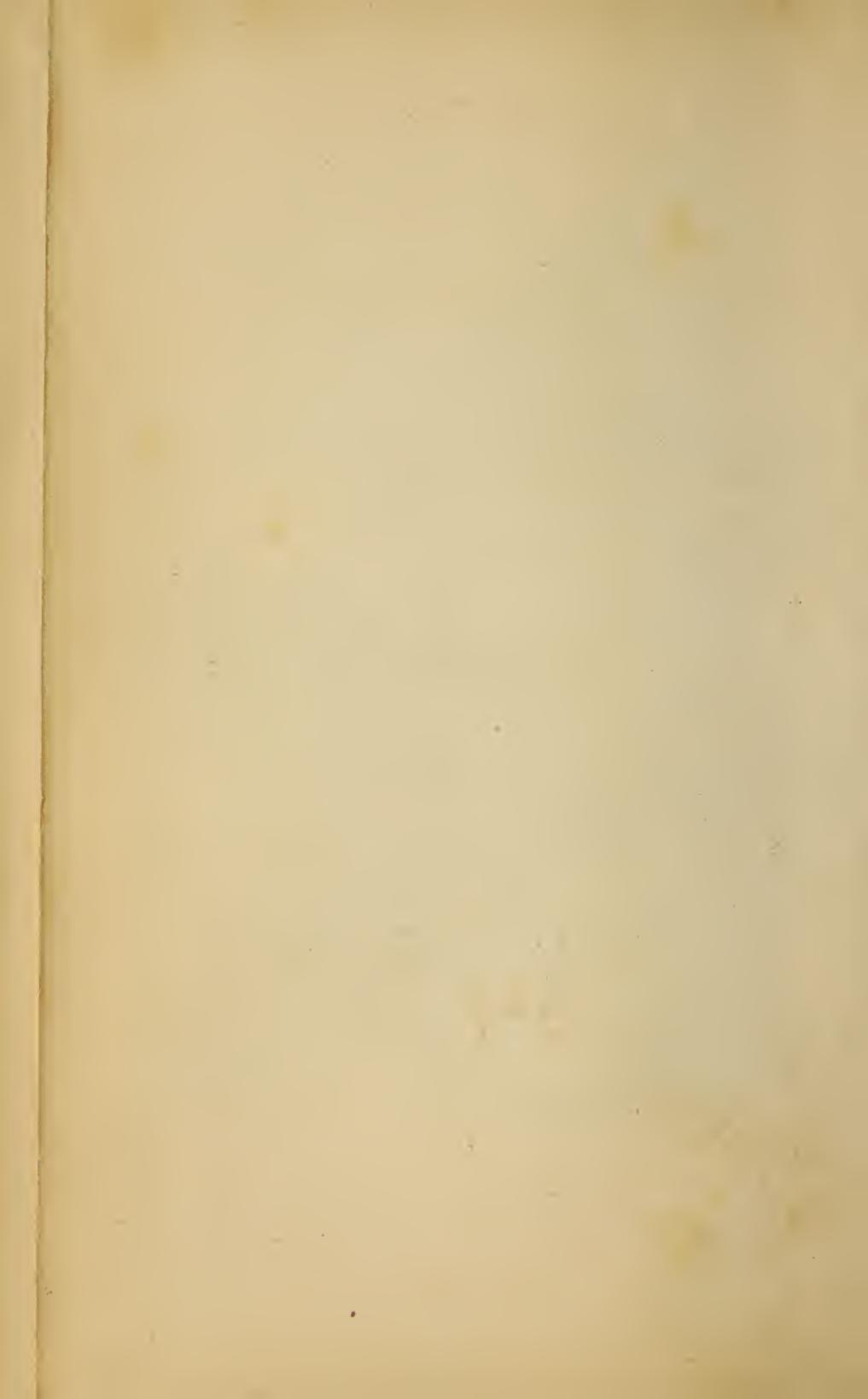
“A leaf from the good book, child,” replied the old woman, as she handed it to her

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BY M.A.C.

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THE

LITTLE EPISCOPALIAN;

THE CHILD TAUGHT BY THE
PRAYER-BOOK.

BY M. A. CURRY

“Plant in the heart of childhood the seed of religious truth, foster its growth by a mother’s prayers and instructions: and sweet will be the blossoms of early piety.”

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TO

THE REV. HENRY C. LAY,

Her Rector,

THIS LITTLE WORK

IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED, BY

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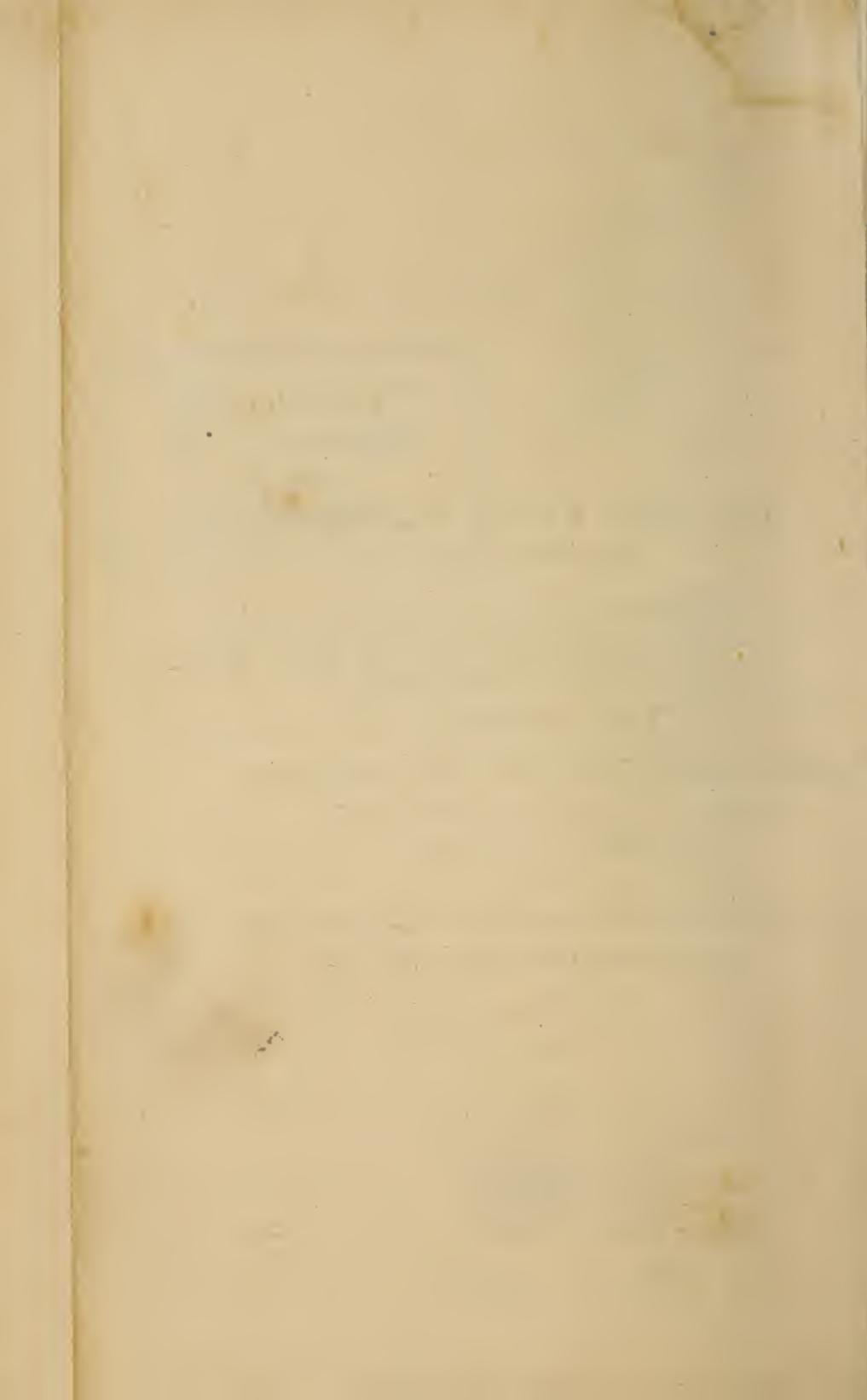
FULLY TO SET FORTH THE TEACHINGS OF THE

CHURCH, SHE ACKNOWLEDGES

THAT,

IT IS PRINCIPALLY TO HIS INSTRUCTION AND GUIDANCE THAT

SHE OWES HER KNOWLEDGE OF THEM.



P R E F A C E.

THE Author of the present unpretending volume is persuaded that, in general, the members of our Church bestow too little time and attention in endeavoring to imbue the minds and hearts of the young with a just appreciation of the value and excellence of the Book of COMMON PRAYER.

It has been the Author's design and wish, as far as lay in her power, to lead the little ones of the Church to think more, and more justly, of those invaluable privileges which they enjoy; and she is not without hope, that, through the medium of a story—all children love a story—they may be led to prize, as a treasure beyond price, the Liturgy of the Church, that sacred Liturgy which is so full of the Holy Word of God.

The Author ventures to say, that, conscious as she is of manifold shortcomings, she has done what she could; and she commends her little

volume to the parents and guides of the young in our Church, with the earnest prayer that God may bless it to the edification and comfort of many a little one who is now training for heaven and eternal joys.

M. A. C.

HUNTSVILLE, ALA.,
Nov. 1st, 1854.

THE

LITTLE EPISCOPALIAN.

CHAPTER I.

“I *will* say it; for it was naughty, it was wicked, for Mary Granville to speak so about the Church. I will ask mother if it was not.”

As these words were uttered, two little girls entered the room where their mother was sitting; one of them, with flushed cheeks, and eyes sparkling with indignation, rushed up to her mother, and was just about to pour out her complaint, when Mrs. Melville quietly laid down her sewing, and drew the child to her. Without apparently noticing her excited manner, the mother took both her hands in

one of her own, and with the other putting back the clustering curls that were streaming in wild disorder over her face, she asked :

“Where has my little girl been?”

“As I came from school, mother, I called in at the church, to see the ladies making Christmas wreaths ; and, mother, isn’t it naughty for Mary Granville to say—”

“And, Bessie,” interrupted Mrs. Melville, “why are they decorating the church ?”

“Because, mother, it is Christmas,” replied Bessie, surprised that her mother should ask such a question.

“I know it, my dear ; but why is the church adorned with evergreens on Christmas, rather than at any other time ?”

“Because, mother,” answered the child, “it is Jesus Christ’s birth-day, and my Sunday school teacher says, that as the church is Jesus Christ’s house, it is very proper to decorate it on his birth-day.”

“Yes, my child,” said Mrs. Melville, “that is all very true ; and can you tell

me why Jesus Christ, who is God, consented to become a man, and to be born, at this time, a poor, little, helpless babe?"

"Yes, mother; He came down into this world to suffer, and die for us, so that we might go to heaven."

"Do you not think, my dear, the blessed Saviour must have loved us a very great deal to have been willing to leave his heavenly home, and come down into this world of trouble and sorrow, and live here for thirty-three years, just that we might go to heaven?"

"Yes," replied the little girl, "I think He must have loved us very much."

"And yet," answered her mother, "my little Bessie has been to that blessed Saviour's house, which they are now decorating just to remind us how much He loved us; and, instead of her little heart being melted into gratitude for all his goodness, she comes rushing home to her mother, with red cheeks and flashing eyes, to tell something wrong that her little companion said."

Poor Bessie's little bosom heaved; she

looked mortified and distressed; and as the tears gathered in her eyes, and began to roll down her cheeks, she faltered out, “I did not know it was a sin to love the Church: I thought I could not love it too much, and that I ought to defend it whenever I heard anybody abuse it; and Mary Granville said—”

“Far be it from me, my darling,” interrupted her mother, “to teach you to undervalue the Church. God himself tells us, in his holy Word, to “reverence his sanctuary”—the very building consecrated to his worship. I trust, my child, that you will always love the Church, devotedly and affectionately, and that, when you grow older, you will study and search out the reasons why you ought to love it, and thus be an intelligent Episcopalian. And ever, while you live, do I wish you to defend the Church against every false and unjust accusation; but, my child, I wish you to remember always to do it, as the Apostle enjoins, ‘in meekness.’ I need scarcely say, Bessie, that I judge, from your manner, you have not exhibited this

meekness in your disagreement with Mary Granville. I have purposely prevented your telling me anything of it before, because I feared that, in your excitement, you might be betrayed into doing her injustice; but now that you are calmer, I will hear all about it; and think, Bessie, as you proceed, and be very careful not to exaggerate or color anything that occurred."

"I will try, mother," said the child, "to tell you exactly the truth."

So saying, she seated herself in a little chair at her mother's feet, and looking up, her eyes still glistening with tears, she said—

"As we came out of school, I asked Jennie if she would not call with me at the church to see how the ladies were getting on with the wreaths. She said she would; and Mary Granville, who was walking with us, said she would like to go, too. So we all went together. We walked all around, looked at the sentence over the pulpit, which is, 'CHRIST OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS;' saw the star in the

East, and thought every thing looked very beautiful."

Here Bessie paused an instant, and while a slight flush mantled her cheek, she resumed, with some effort—

"I think, mother, I felt a little proud of our church, because none of the others, you know, are ever dressed up so handsomely, and perhaps Mary noticed it, as I turned and asked her, why they did not dress up her church on Christmas?"

"She tossed her head, and said, 'Because her church did not believe in any such ridiculous nonsense.' Now, mother, wasn't it wrong, wasn't it wicked, for her to speak so of God's holy Church?" And again Bessie's cheeks glowed, and her bright eyes flashed with indignation.

Mrs. Melville's countenance assumed a very grave expression as she replied—

"Yes, my daughter, it was very wrong for Mary Granville to utter such words as these with reference to the Church. The term 'ridiculous nonsense' is a very harsh one to apply to any religious custom, but it becomes a really sinful expression

when applied to the usages of the Church of God, and is especially unbecoming from the lips of a child. I sincerely trust that Mary will see her fault and ask God's forgiveness; and, my dear child, if you think that anything in your tone or manner provoked her to say this, you, too, ought sincerely to implore pardon from God for having tempted her to commit this sin. And what did you say in reply to this, my daughter?"

"Before I tell you, mother, as I promised to speak the whole truth, I must say that Jennie—who was standing where Mary could not see her, but I could—laid her finger on her lip, and motioned to me not to say any more; and I wish now I had followed her advice, for I do not think I did any good by what I said; but I thought I could not quite bear such a speech as that made about my Church, so I said, I cannot see that there is any more 'ridiculous nonsense' in dressing our church with evergreens, to show our gladness on the Saviour's birth-day, than in hanging black crape all over your pulpit,

last year, to show your sorrow when your minister died."

A transient smile passed over Mrs. Melville's countenance at Bessie's reply, but she suppressed it before the child perceived it, and her face resumed its expression of grave seriousness.

Bessie continued:—

"‘Yes,’ Mary said, ‘but that was a very different thing.’ And, mother, when she said this I got really angry, and I suspect I showed it, for my cheeks burned and I said to her, ‘I think myself it is a very different thing; Jesus Christ, at whose birth we rejoice, is God; Mr. Lawson, whose death you lamented, was a man: indeed it *is* a very different thing.’ This is all, mother. I suspect Mary would have answered me, and I dare say we might have quarrelled there in the church, but Jennie came up just then, and looked at me so sadly, and said, ‘Come, Bessie, that will do, let us go home now;’ and then she put her arm around me, and drew me out of the church. Mother, I know I did wrong from the first. I see it all now, and I

am very sorry for it; but, most of all, I am sorry for what I said to dear, good Jennie; for when she told me, as we walked along home, how much she regretted what I had said, and that she was afraid it would only make Mary dislike the church, and never come there at all, I said, I did not care if she never came; for nobody ought ever to go to a church where they thought any thing that was done was 'ridiculous nonsense.' Jennie is so patient; she never gets out of temper; never says anything hastily. I do not believe she ever did anything wrong in her life. I wish I could be half as lovely as she is. I am so sorry I was cross to her." Bessie's lip quivered, and her eyes filled, and as the arm of that affectionate sister, whose presence in the room she had quite forgotten, was lovingly passed around her waist, she turned and saw Jennie's pale, sweet face, and large, deep-blue eyes, looking fondly at her. The impulsive child clasped her to her bosom, and sobbed out her sorrow that she had been cross

to her darling sister, and said so much to wound her feelings.

Mrs. Melville sat quietly looking at them, with no traces of emotion except the quivering lip. She was a woman of the deepest feeling, and had once exercised as little control over it as the impetuous Bessie; but she had been severely schooled by affliction, and had learned to control herself, and would probably have passed, with those who knew her but slightly, as a woman devoid of any great sensibility. She had been for two years a widow, and the loss of an affectionate husband seemed to have left her to concentrate all the ardor of her loving nature upon these two children. She loved them both devotedly, and yet, although scarcely conscious of it herself, there was a yearning tenderness in her feeling towards Jennie, which did not exist in her heart for Bessie. Jennie was peculiarly endeared to her mother by the gentleness of her character, refined, as it was, by a deep and fervent piety, which was none the less sincere and

earnest because seen in a child of only eleven summers; while her delicate frame and languid step awakened a scarce acknowledged dread, that one so lovely, and yet so frail, might not sojourn long on earth.

Mrs. Melville waited, without a word, until Bessie's excited feelings had, in a measure, exhausted themselves; and then quietly said—

“I am glad, my child, to see you sorry for the manner in which you spoke to your gentle sister. You have asked, and obtained her forgiveness; is that all you have to do?”

“No, mother. I must ask God's forgiveness, too; for I know He cannot be pleased with such a bad-tempered girl as I have been to-day.”

“Very well,” said her mother; “I hope, Bessie, you will not forget it.”

“Oh, no! mother, I shall not do that,” replied she; and, seizing her bonnet, the volatile child ran out into the yard to play, and quickly the remembrance of her sin and of her contrition had passed

away, "like the morning cloud or the early dew."

Mrs. Melville was a judicious as well as devoted mother. Her children and their welfare formed the absorbing thought of her heart. They were her world; their society was her only earthly pleasure; their happiness, all her desire. She had no worldly ambition for them. She intended, if she lived, to give them every advantage of education, and every accomplishment that money could purchase; and this not with a view to their making a grand display, and becoming, what the world calls, brilliant women; but she considered it a Christian duty to improve, to the utmost extent, every faculty and every talent which God had given them, that they might be made happier and more useful. It was her design, moreover, to educate their hearts as well as their minds, and this she considered too sacred a privilege to be delegated to any other person. She had none of that maternal blindness to their faults and imperfections which we too often see in mothers. On

the contrary, she was constantly on the alert to discover them, and then she prayerfully directed all her energies to correcting them. Neither was she in a hurry to have her children perfect all at once, but would frequently wait whole days for a suitable opportunity to administer a reproof or notice a fault. She now felt sincerely sorry that her thoughtless child seemed so lightly to regard the advice which she had rather implied than given with reference to asking God's forgiveness, but fearing the effects of too much fault-finding, she said nothing at present, but silently resumed her sewing.

As Bessie bounded out of the room, in the exuberance of childish glee, Jennie's eyes followed her with an expression of sadness, and a sigh, scarcely audible, reached her mother's ear.

"What makes my little daughter sigh?"

"I was wondering, mother," Jennie sadly replied, "why I cannot run about and play, like Bessie, and all the other little girls. But I always feel so tired,

even when I am sitting still; and if I try to play, it makes my head ache so, that I have to stop directly. What is the reason, mother? do you know?"

A painful chord was touched in the mother's heart, but she repressed the tears which dimmed her eyes, and, passing her hand caressingly through the long brown curls that floated over Jennie's shoulders, she replied, in a voice tremulous with emotion—

"It is, my darling, because you are not naturally so strong and robust as your sister."

"But, mother, what is the reason I am not so strong as Bessie?"

There was no avoiding a direct answer to this question; so Mrs. Melville replied—

"Because, my dear, God did not make you so. He did not give you as vigorous a constitution as He gave to your sister."

"And why *didn't* He, mother? Why didn't God make us both strong and well?"

"Ah, my child! your mother cannot

tell you that. But this I can tell you, Jennie: God has some wise and good reason for making you a frail, delicate little girl. You know, my darling, how it grieves me to see you sick and languid; you know, when you are suffering pain, how gladly I would relieve you, by taking it and bearing it myself, if I could; but you may be sure that God does not love to see you suffer, any more than I do, and that He would never let you have one moment's pain, if He did not have some merciful design in it."

Jennie made no reply; and Mrs. Melville felt so saddened by the train of thought suggested by the child's questions, that she relapsed into silence.

The little girl fixed her eyes upon the floor, and for a few moments seemed lost in thought; then suddenly she looked up earnestly into her mother's face and said, "Mother, I will tell you why I think God did not make me strong and healthy, like Bessie. I think He is going to make me die before I grow up to be a woman." Mrs. Melville started, as if stung to her

inmost soul, for the child's words seemed but the echo of what was passing in her own mind at that instant. She clasped her child to her bosom, and exclaimed—

“ May God, in his mercy, forbid it, my darling !”

A few minutes passed without a word being spoken, and then Jennie said—

“ I believe, mother, if God would let me have my choice, I would rather go to heaven while I am a little girl.”

Mrs. Melville looked at her with bewildered surprise, and said—

“ Why, my dear ?”

“ Because, mother, I believe the Saviour loves little children better than He loves anybody else. I was reading this morning about his taking them in his arms, and putting his hands upon their heads and blessing them. I would love for him to lay his hands upon my head and bless me, and He cannot do it until I go to heaven.”

“ Yes, he can, my darling, and he did take you in his arms and bless you, when I carried you, a little baby, and had you baptized.”

An expression of surprise covered Jennie's whole countenance, as she said, with childish simplicity, "I never knew before that Jesus Christ was in this world, when I was a baby."

"He was not here, my child, bodily, as he once was; but his minister took you in his arms and laid his hand upon you, when he signed you with the sign of the cross, and he blessed you in the Saviour's name. Do you remember, Jennie, when we went to see poor Mrs. Edwards, the other day, that I told her, if she would send up the next day, I would give her some provisions and clothes for her children? and do you remember, the next morning, as I was going out, I turned back, and told you, that if she sent while I was gone, you must give them in my place?"

"Yes, mother, I remember it all."

"Now, Jennie, those articles were *mine*, although *you* sent them, and if I had not told you to send them, you would have done very wrong to give them away without my permission. Just so it was in your baptism. The blessings which Mr.

Kennedy promised you were the Saviour's blessings, and if Christ had not told his ministers that they must act in his place, they would have no more right to promise any blessings in his name, than you would have to give away what is mine without my permission. Do you understand this, my daughter?"

"Yes, mother, I think I do."

"So, then, Jennie, it was only because Christ was not here bodily to do it himself, that his minister blessed you in his stead; and, my dear child, the Saviour feels just as much bound to keep the promises which Mr. Kennedy made for him, as if he had himself held you in his arms, and blessed you with his own mouth."

"Mother, what promises did the Saviour make to me, when I was baptized?"

"Take your Prayer Book, Jennie, and I will show you."

Jennie went to a stand, on which lay a Bible and Prayer Book, of very large size, which Mrs. Melville used in her daily family prayers. Her slight frame tottered

under the weight of the heavy book, but she reached her mother safely, without letting it fall, and laid it upon her lap.

Mrs. Melville turned to the Baptismal service, and pointing to the place, Jennie read—

“Ye have prayed that our Lord Jesus Christ would vouchsafe to receive *him*, to release *him* from sin, to sanctify *him* with the Holy Ghost, to give *him* the kingdom of heaven and everlasting life. Ye have heard, also, that our Lord Jesus Christ hath promised, in his Gospel, to grant all these things that ye have prayed for: which promise, he, for his part, will most surely keep and perform.”

“That will do, Jennie,” said her mother; “do you know now what promises the Saviour made to you?”

The child hesitated a moment, and then thoughtfully shook her head.

“Well, my dear, we will look at them again. What is the first thing we asked the Saviour to do for you?”

Mrs. Melville pointed to the place, and Jennie read—

“‘That our Lord Jesus Christ would vouchsafe to receive *him*.’”

“Stop there, Jennie, and let us talk about that, and see what it means. To receive *him*—that is, to take the little baby as his own child; to love him, to watch over him, to take care of him, to guard him from all danger. This is what we mean when we ask the Saviour to receive the child we bring to him. Read what we ask for next.”

“‘To release *him* from sin.’”

“To release, Jennie, means to set free. Here we pray that God will help the child, as he grows up, to love to do what is right, and avoid what is wrong; and that he will forgive him when he does wrong and is sorry for it. What do we pray for next?”

“‘That he will sanctify *him* with the Holy Ghost.’”

“To sanctify,” said Mrs. Melville, “is to make holy. Here we ask God to make the little babe holy; to give him both the desire and the power to grow better every day, and to become more like God. There

is yet another thing that we pray for; read what it is."

Jennie read—

"To give *him* the kingdom of heaven and everlasting life."

"This, my child, needs no explanation. Heaven, you know, is that blessed world, where the inhabitant shall never say, 'I am sick;' where God shall wipe away all tears; where there shall be no more sorrow, neither crying nor death; and everlasting life is a life that has no end."

Jennie looked very thoughtful, and, pressing her little hand upon her forehead, said, musingly—

"That must be a pleasant home where nobody is ever sick; I think I would like to be there now, for then my head would not throb so. Now, mother, tell me over all these blessings at once. I can understand better what they are when you tell them to me, than when I read them myself."

Mrs. Melville repeated them carefully to the little girl.

"The Saviour promises that the person

baptized shall be his own child ; that he will love him and take care of him ; that he will help him to do what is right, and avoid what is wrong ; that he will make him grow better and better every day ; and that, when he dies, he shall go to heaven, where he shall live for ever. All these things, Jennie, the Saviour promised to you, by Mr. Kennedy, when you were baptized."

"I wonder, mother, if I will be certain to have all these things.' "

"Read what the Prayer Book says, my dear."

Jennie read—

" ' Which promise He for his part will most surely keep and perform.' "

Her eyes wandered from the book, and she seemed lost in thought; then, suddenly starting up, she hastily asked—

"Mother, will Mr. Bennett go to heaven?"

"I trust so, my dear; but why do you ask?"

"Because he is very wicked. Would he go to heaven, if he were to die now,

without being sorry for his sin, or asking God to forgive him, for Christ's sake?"

"No, Jennie; most certainly not."

"Why, mother, I heard him say, that he was baptized when he was a little baby; and you know, I just now read that Christ promises the kingdom of heaven to every child that is baptized."

"Dear Jennie, we will talk a little about that. When I promised to give Mrs. Edwards those articles, I did not say, I will send my own servant down with them; I told her if she would send up herself I would give them to her. Do you know why I did this?"

Jennie shook her head.

"Because," replied her mother, "I knew she could very conveniently send her little boy for them, and I thought if she did not care enough about them to take that much trouble, she could not be in very great need of what I had offered to give her. So, then, I did not promise those things to her absolutely but conditionally. If she sent, she would surely get them; if not, she would not

get them. Do you see this, my daughter?"

"Yes, mother, I understand this perfectly."

"In the same way, my dear, has our Saviour promised us the blessings of his baptismal covenant; not absolutely, but conditionally."

"His baptismal what, mother?"

"Covenant, my child. Covenant means agreement, and you know it always takes two persons to make an agreement. I made the agreement with Mrs. Edwards, that if she would send I would give her what I had promised. I was bound to do it if she sent; but if not, I was entirely released from my promise. Just so it is in baptism. The Saviour promises blessings on certain conditions, and on these conditions alone. I will show you what the Prayer Book says these are."

Mrs. Melville found the place, and Jennie read.

"This child hath promised by you, his sureties, to renounce the devil, and

all his works; to believe in God, and to serve him.'"

"That is sufficient, my dear. To renounce means to give up."

In another part of this service, the minister asks the person who brings the little baby to be baptized—

"Dost thou, in the name of this child, renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, and the sinful desires of the flesh?" To give up the devil and all his works; to try earnestly and constantly to resist the efforts which this evil one is always making to persuade us to do what will displease God; to give up all that love for the world, its fashions and gayeties, which will make us forget God, and so dissipate our minds that we cannot fix our thoughts on serious things; and, lastly, to give up our evil tempers and wicked desires, to try and be meek and gentle, to love God and holiness, and to desire only those things which will make us better Christians and prepare us to go to heaven; all this is the first promise.

"The second promise which is made for the child is, that it shall 'believe the Apostles' Creed.' You know what that is, Jennie."

"Yes, mother," replied the child; and slowly and reverently she repeated the Creed.

When she had finished, her mother said:

"The last promise is, that the child shall, by God's help, 'obediently keep God's holy will and commandments all his life.' Now, Jennie, listen to me attentively, and I will tell you in a few words what baptism is. Christ is not in this world in his bodily presence; so He tells his minister to take his place, and act in his stead. The little baby is too young to promise for itself, so its mother and father, or Christian friends, promise in its place. The minister calls upon the parents to promise that the child shall resist all the persuasions of the devil to make him do wrong; that he shall give up all the gayeties and vanities of the world which interfere with his

duty to God ; that he shall try and have a gentle and patient spirit ; that he shall believe the Creed ; and that he shall try all his life to obey God's commandments. These are the promises which the parents make for the child. Then the minister promises for Christ that He will love this little child, and take care of him ; that He will help him to resist the temptations of the devil ; that He will make him grow better every day, and at last, when he dies, will take him to heaven. This, Jennie, is what is meant by the baptismal covenant."

"Mother," replied Jennie, "I think I shall love to read the Baptismal service now, because I begin to understand something about it. I have never tried to read it by myself, because when I have looked over as Mr. Kennedy read it in church, it always seemed too hard for a little girl like me to understand. So I thought I would wait until I grew older before I would ever try to read it again."

Jennie mused a little while, and then said—

"Mother, what is the use of making those promises for a little baby? How does anybody know that the little baby is going, when he grows up, to keep them? I should think it would be better to wait until he grows old enough to make his own promises."

"A great many older persons than you are, Jennie, have found the same objection to Infant Baptism. My child, which would you rather do—have all those blessings now which the Saviour promised to you when you were baptized, or wait until you are a grown woman before you get them?"

"Oh, mother," replied the child, with great earnestness, "I would a great deal rather have them now, because I might not live to be a grown woman. But I thought you said the Saviour only promised me those blessings if I would promise to do something, too. Now, mother, you know I have not done any thing yet, because I never knew before what you had promised him I should do. But I am going to try now; and as soon as I begin to do what you said I should,

He will begin to give me what Mr. Kennedy said He would ; is that it, mother ? ”

“ Not quite, my child. The Saviour is a great deal more merciful than even your young, innocent heart can believe, and He loves you too much to wait so long before He blesses you. I promised for you, and I am bound to keep those promises in your place, until you are old enough to understand and keep them for yourself. And if I do this faithfully and earnestly ; if I take you every day when I pray, and give you over again to that Blessed Saviour, asking him to make you a good little Christian now, without waiting until you grow up to be a woman ; and if I teach you about that Saviour, and try to make you understand that you are his child, and are bound to love and obey him ; and if I try to impress upon you a fear of doing what you know will displease him ; then I am keeping the promises I made for you, and Christ will bless you just the same as if you kept them for yourself.”

The child arose from her little chair, and, with her large, blue eyes filled with tears, she lovingly twined her arms around her mother's neck, and said, very earnestly--

"I think, dear mother, this is a great deal better way than promising for myself; for I know you love me so much, and are so anxious for the Saviour to bless me, that you will try a great deal harder to keep the promises for me, than I would to keep them for myself."

Her mother pressed her to her bosom, and said, falteringly, "God knows, my precious child, how earnestly I wish that I could keep them more faithfully, and you might be blessed more abundantly. But, my darling, there is one other thing I must tell you. As soon as you grow old enough to understand what I have promised for you, then you will have to assume, or take these promises, and keep them for yourself; if you do not, then Christ will take away all the blessings which He has given you while I kept them for you. Your mother can only keep them, in your

place, until you are old enough to keep them yourself."

"Mother, you have told me now, and I begin to understand a little, but only a little, of what I have to do. Are you going to stop keeping these promises for me, now, and give them over to me, to keep all by myself? Mother, I am almost too small yet, I think, to do it all alone. I will try what I can do, and you will help out the rest, won't you, dear mother?"

Mrs. Melville could not repress a smile, at the half-affrighted manner with which Jennie seemed to shrink from assuming her baptismal vows; and she replied, "I will do, my child, just what I have always done for you, for it is no disagreeable duty, but a sweet privilege, for your mother to plead, every day, that the blessed Saviour will love and take care of her little girl. But, my dear, there is One who is both more able and more willing even than I am to help you to keep these baptismal promises."

Jennie looked incredulous, and asked—
"Who, mother?"

"The Holy Spirit, my daughter, will most certainly help you far better than any human being can; and He has promised to do it, if you will only ask his assistance. With his help, my child, young as you are, you need not be afraid to promise to do what, without that aid, you never can do, even if you live to be a very old woman; and if you go to your Saviour, and tell him just what you told me a little while ago, 'that you cannot do these things by yourself; that you will do all you can;' and ask him, as you have asked me, 'to help out the rest,' He will do it, my child, a great deal better than your mother can, although she loves you so dearly, and would so willingly help you."

Jennie made no reply, and sat for a little while in silence, and then said—

"Mother, you did not tell me, after all, if Mr. Bennett will go to heaven."

"I cannot tell, my child; but this I know, that the mere fact of his having been baptized will not take him there. While his mother kept, faithfully, the promises which she made for him, the Sa-

viour blessed him; but if, after he became old enough himself to understand and fulfil these promises, he did not do it, then Christ stopped blessing him. This was the agreement at his baptism, was it not?"

"Yes, mother, you have explained this to me."

There was another pause. Jennie sat, leaning her forehead upon her hand. At last, she said—

"Mother, I am so tired, and my head aches so. If I lie down upon the sofa, will you bring your chair and sit by me, and hold my head a little while?"

"Certainly, my darling."

Mrs. Melville rang the bell, and had the sofa rolled up before the fire, and Jennie's pillow brought down stairs. She laid her little girl down, and covered her with all a mother's tenderness and care, and sitting down beside her, laid her hand, with gentle pressure, upon the throbbing brow. Jennie's feeble energies seemed entirely exhausted, and in a few minutes she was in a deep sleep.

The mother sat watching her slumber-

ing child, and a groan, rather than a sigh, escaped her, as she saw the slight flush upon her pale cheek gradually deepen into a bright crimson spot. Too surely did her breaking heart read the seal of that insidious disease which generally selects as its victims the young and lovely ; and she had become too sadly familiar with it in her earlier days not to recognize now its sure and unmistakable impress.

With one hand she stilled the throb-bings of her child's aching head ; and with the other she tried to still the throb-bings of her own aching heart, as she thought how utterly unavailing would be all a mother's agony and tears, how hopelessly impotent all her efforts to relieve the sufferings of a child she would willingly die to save.

With eyes undimmed by a tear, and lips firmly compressed, as if to forbid the utterance of a groan, and a countenance on whose every feature was written the deepest anguish, she watched the little sleeper, whose repose seemed deep and undisturbed. At length, hearing Bessie's

merry voice, as she rapidly approached the house, Mrs. Melville arose hastily, but quietly, and went to the door to impose silence upon that happy, noisy child. She met her, and spoke not a word, but merely motioned to her to come in quietly; yet a cloud instantly overspread the child's countenance, and the unspoken sorrow of Mrs. Melville's heart seemed instantly to daguerreotype itself, as it were, on Bessie's face.

Afraid and distressed, she knew not why, she walked very softly into the room, gazed intently for a few moments upon her sleeping sister, then seating herself upon the floor, close beside the sofa, she fixed her eyes upon Jennie's face, and sat as immovable as a statue.

Mrs. Melville resumed her seat, and the silence was unbroken, save by Jennie's deep and regular breathing.

At last poor little Bessie's suspense became intolerable. She arose, crept up to her mother's side, and gently whispered, "Mother, is Jennie going to die?"

A shudder ran through Mrs. Melville's

frame as she replied, "God only knows, my child. But hush! you must not talk now. She is sleeping very sweetly, and it will be wrong to disturb her."

Bessie went softly back to her place, and now her eyes wandered from Jennie's face to her mother's; and, in watching the two, she passed what seemed to her a very long hour, while her sister slept.

At last Jennie awoke, and turning her eyes towards her mother, said with a smile—

"I have had a nice nap, haven't I, mother?"

"Yes, my dear," replied her mother. "Bessie and I have kept very still, so as not to awaken you."

Bessie, whose childish anxieties and fears had been aroused rather by the expression of her mother's countenance, than by anything in the appearance of her sister, now that she saw her smile as usual, sprang from her seat, and throwing herself on the sofa, close by Jennie, said—

"Why, Jennie, I thought you must be sick, to lie down and go to sleep such a

bright sunshiny day. But you are not, are you?"

"No," replied Jennie, "not sick, Bes-sie; only my head ached, and I felt tired; but now, since I have been asleep, I am as well as ever."

She arose from the sofa, and seated herself in the little chair by the fire, and Bes-sie patted her on the cheek, and said, laughingly—

"No, indeed, sister, you cannot be very sick; for you have two beautiful red spots upon your cheeks, and such great big, blue eyes. I declare, Jennie, you are so pretty!" And the affectionate child put her arms around her sister's neck, and kissed her again and again.

Jennie returned her embrace, and said quietly, "I am glad my cheeks are red, Bes-sie. Everybody calls me the pale-faced little girl, and I always wanted to have bright cheeks, like yours."

An expression of pain rested on Mrs. Melville's countenance as she thought, how strange it is that this fearful disease always comes under the garb and hue of health;

and while her own heart was wrung by a certainty which could not, for one moment, be deceived, she envied the blissful unconsciousness of her unsuspecting children.

CHAPTER II.

IN a few minutes Bessie was detailing to her sister, with childish eagerness, all the pleasure she had enjoyed in her romp in the yard. Her mother waited patiently until her volubility had exhausted itself, and then said, quietly—

“I should think, Bessie, you must have enjoyed yourself very much, indeed, for you made a good deal of noise for so small a girl.”

“Did I make too much noise, mother?” asked she, inquiringly.

“Not at all, my daughter. I love to see you happy, and enjoy your play; and when there is no one sick, to be disturbed by noise, I do not care how much you make, provided always that you are not rude, and are good-humored. Nothing does me so much good as to see my little girls happy, and no music sounds half so

sweet to me as their merry, joyous laugh. So then, my daughter, I suppose you have forgotten all the bad feelings you had towards Mary Granville."

"Oh, yes, mother," replied Bessie; "I forgot them as soon as I went out in the yard to play."

"I think, my dear, the last thing you did, before you went out, was to beg your sister's pardon for having been cross to her. Do you think you would have enjoyed yourself so much if you had gone without doing this?"

"No, mother, I know I would not; for I did feel very sorry that I had spoken so to her, and I could not have been satisfied until I had told her so."

"Was there any other person, Bessie, whom you had offended, beside your sister?"

"Yes, ma'am," replied Bessie, looking down upon the carpet; and then she almost whispered, "God."

"Now, Bessie, it is right for you to love your sister dearly, and to be very sorry when you treat her badly; but ought you

to be most sorry for offending God or your sister?"

Before Bessie could reply, Jennie spoke up hastily, "Oh! mother, I was not offended with Bessie. I was only sorry that she had spoken so to Mary Granville, because I thought it was wrong; and I love Bessie so much, that I cannot bear for her to do what is wrong."

"That, my child, is precisely the feeling which God has towards all sinners. He knows that sin is wrong and must be punished, and it is because He loves us so much that He dislikes so much to see us commit sin. But, Bessie, you have not answered my question. For which ought you to be most sorry, your offence against God or against your sister?"

"I ought to be most sorry for offending God."

"And yet, Bessie, you were not. You felt a great deal more regret for what you said to Jennie, than for your sin against God."

Bessie looked up at her mother, and said—

"How can you tell, mother? You cannot see into my heart."

"No, my child; but I can judge by your actions. As soon as you thought how cross you had been to her, you put your arms around her, and told her, with tears, how sorry you were, and asked her forgiveness. When you had obtained this, you ran out to play with a light heart, although you had not told God that you were sorry for your sin, and although He had not forgiven you. Which of these instances shows most sorrow?"

Bessie hung her head, and said nothing. At length she replied—

"But, mother, I am going to ask God's forgiveness when I pray to him to-night."

"Why, my dear, did you not wait until to-night, or to-morrow, to ask your sister's pardon?"

"Because, mother, I felt so sorry I could not wait; and, besides, Jennie was here by me, and all I had to do was just to ask her."

"Bessie, how much farther off is God than your sister was? Does not the Bible

teach us that He is close to us, and that his eye is upon us all the time?"

"Yes, mother."

"Then, Bessie, you have not given me the true reason yet. It was not because your sister was nearer to you, that you asked her forgiveness first. Try and think what the reason was."

Bessie thought a little while, and said: "Mother, I had nothing to do but to ask Jennie, and I knew she would forgive me, and would tell me so: but when I ask God to pardon me for what I do wrong, I have to go off by myself, and kneel down, and tell him, and even then He does not tell me He has forgiven me, and I do not know whether He has or not."

"Now, Bessie, I wish to tell you a little about these objections. In the first place, it seems it was a little more trouble to ask God's forgiveness than to ask Jennie's; and in the second place, you did not feel quite so sure of obtaining it. Am I right, my daughter?"

Bessie looked ashamed and distressed, but she always spoke the truth; so, after a

little hesitation, she replied, "I believe so, mother."

"I do not think, my dear," said Mrs. Melville, "that I need say any thing to you about the first objection, for I am well assured, that when you reflect how good and merciful God is to you, you will be sincerely sorry to know, that when you offend this tender and affectionate Father, you are wicked enough to think it too much trouble to ask his forgiveness. But I would like to say a few words about your other objection; that you are not perfectly sure of obtaining God's forgiveness when you ask it. Bessie, what makes you doubt it, my child?"

"Because, mother," readily replied the little girl, "God does not speak to me and tell me He forgives me, as Jennie did a little while ago. If I could only hear him say so, I would be very glad to go, every time I do wrong, and ask him to forgive me; for, mother, I really do want to please God, and I am always sorry the very minute I do wrong."

"I believe you speak truly, my dear,

and I trust you will always be, as one of the prayers in our Prayer Book says, 'both afraid and ashamed to offend him.' But, Bessie, He has spoken, and told you He would forgive your sins."

Bessie shook her head, doubtfully, and said, "I never heard him, mother."

"Now, Bessie, listen to me. You bring your spelling-book every night for me to help you with your lessons. Do you ever think perhaps I will say, 'Go away, Bessie, I have not time now, but maybe I will help you to-morrow night.'"

"No, mother, I know you will not say so, because when I commenced going to school last session, you told me to come to you every night, and you would help me."

"So, then, your mother's promise, given once, a long time ago, is sufficient. Is it, Bessie?"

"Yes, ma'am. I am never afraid you will break your promise."

"Who is most likely, Bessie, to break a promise, God or your mother?"

Bessie thought a moment, and then said resolutely: "Neither, mother. I know

God would not break his promise, and I know you would not break it, either."

"It is true," said Mrs. Melville, "that I have a great dread of the least departure from the strict truth, and I always endeavor to adhere closely to it; but after all, my child, I might, perhaps, without knowing it, deviate from it, but the Bible tells us God cannot lie. Now, Bessie, if I can show you that God promised, once for all, a long time ago, to forgive our sins when we are really sorry, and tell him so, will you believe that his promise holds good now, just as you believe your mother's word, given so many months ago, holds good now?"

"Yes, ma'am, I will," replied she.

Mrs. Melville took from her work-basket, by her side, a small Prayer Book, which formed as much a part of the furniture of that basket as did her needle-case or thimble, and to whose pages she referred many times during the day. She opened it, and pointing to a portion of the last text of Scripture appointed to be read at the commencement of morning or even-

ing service, she told Bessie to read. She did so.

“ ‘If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.’ ”

“ Are you satisfied now, my child? Does this promise, which God made long ago, hold good yet?”

Bessie hesitated, and then said, rather timidly, as if afraid she was doing wrong: “ That is not the Bible that says so, mother. That is the Prayer Book.”

Her mother, instead of reproofing her, as she seemed almost to expect, drew her little girl close to her side, and said—

“ I am not sorry, my darling, to hear you say that. The Bible must ever be first in your affections, and all other books you must value just in proportion as their teachings accord with God’s holy Word; and neither the Prayer Book nor any other book is worth any thing if it is contrary to the Bible. But, Bessie, about nine-tenths of the Prayer Book is copied, word for word, from the Bible, and in all the rest of it I have never found any thing that was not strictly in accordance with the teachings

of the Holy Scriptures. When you and Jennie are old enough, I shall put the Bible and Prayer Book together into your hands, that you may have the pleasure of seeing for yourselves how perfectly they agree; and you will then find out that the Prayer Book has gathered up all the teachings of the Bible, and shown us how we may put them in practice. But to return to what we were talking about just now. Read what is at the bottom of the passage which you have read from the Prayer Book."

Bessie read slowly and wonderingly—
“One John—one—eight—nine;” and looked up at her mother inquiringly.

Mrs. Melville answered her appealing look.

“The Apostle John wrote, besides the Gospel, three letters or Epistles, which are distinguished as First, Second, Third John. The next figure indicates the chapter; the next two show what verses. So, then, these puzzling letters read this way:—First John, first chapter, eighth and ninth verses. Now, Bessie, if I can find these

very words in the Bible, you will take them as God's own promise, will you not?"

"Yes, mother, I will."

Mrs. Melville arose, and going to the stand, opened the large Bible, and calling Bessie, showed her the passage and made her read it.

She then asked her if she was satisfied. All her objections were now entirely removed, so she answered—

"Yes, ma'am;" and then relapsed into silence.

Her mother gave her a few moments to reflect, and then said—

"Do you not believe now that God has told you he will forgive you if you confess your sins; and when you do confess them, will you not be just as certain that he has forgiven you, as you now are that Jennie has pardoned you?"

"Yes, mother," replied she; and then, after pausing an instant, she added: "But I think I would be a little better satisfied, if he would speak to me each time, and tell me he has forgiven that very sin

which I have just asked him to pardon."

"That is a perfectly natural feeling, my daughter; and it is for this very reason that the Church, always careful of our comfort as well as our instruction, provides that the minister shall pronounce the pardon, or 'Declaration of Absolution,' as it is called in the Prayer Book, immediately after the General Confession. On our bended knees we acknowledge our sins to God, and implore his pardon; and although we have his promise, given long ago, that he will forgive us, yet it is very pleasant and comfortable to hear a voice speaking plainly in our ear this precious assurance, 'He pardoneth and absolveth all those who truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel.' This, my child, 'is telling us each time,' as you say, that he has pardoned us."

Bessie was silent for a little while, and then said—

"But, mother, when I confess my sins, *how* sorry must I be?—that is the difficulty. I might not be sorry enough for God to forgive me. I might feel perfectly

satisfied, and think I was forgiven, while God was still very angry with me."

" You must be sorry enough, my child, to be determined that, if God will help you, you will not commit that same sin, whatever it is, again. And you must try and not forget your resolution, but must watch over yourself, and be very careful not to do so any more. Do you understand it all now, Bessie?"

" Yes, mother, I think I do, perfectly."

Mrs. Melville was generally satisfied with pointing out their duty to her children, and then giving them time to fulfil it voluntarily. She did not now ask Bessie to seek God's forgiveness at once. She had shown to her, very clearly, what unjust conceptions she had formed of God's willingness to pardon, and she now concluded, after pointing out her error, to leave it to the child herself to rectify it. She thought she had talked enough to her for the present, so she changed the conversation, and commenced asking about her romping and playing in the yard.

Bessie's face brightened at once, and she said—

"Oh, mother! I had entirely forgotten what I was running into the house to ask you about when you told me to be quiet and not wake sister. Susie Danvers came over to play with me, and says there is a man in town who has the most beautiful canary birds and cages to sell. Her mother is going to get one for her to-morrow, and I told her I would run and ask you if you would not buy one for me; but when you met me at the door, and looked so sad, and told me to come in quietly, for Jennie was asleep and sick, I never thought of Susie or the birds any more until this moment. But, mother, please do buy two birds; one for me, and one for Jennie. They will sing so sweetly, and play so prettily, and be such pleasant company for you when we are at school. Won't you, dear mother?"

Mrs. Melville was a very indulgent mother whenever she could conscientiously gratify her children; so she said, "Certainly I will, my dear. I will take you

both down to-morrow, and let you select them yourselves."

Bessie capered over the floor for joy; but Jennie looked quietly up into her mother's face, and said—

"Mother, if you will let me choose, there is a pet I would rather have than a canary bird."

"Well, my darling, if mother can get it, you shall have it. What is it, Jennie?"

"A little lamb, mother."

"A little what?" asked Bessie, who had ceased her capers to hear what on earth it was that Jennie could prefer to a singing bird.

"Lamb," repeated Jennie.

"Well! what a choice!" ejaculated Bessie. "Prefer a lamb to a canary bird! I always did think, Jennie, you were a queer child."

"Never mind," said her mother. "If Jennie prefers it, she shall have it, if there is one to be found any where. I will send to the plantation to-morrow, and see if we can get one; but I am very much afraid, my daughter, that you will have to wait

until Spring, for it is very seldom that we have lambs at Christmas, even in our warm climate. However, we will try, and if we succeed, we will tie a blue ribbon around his neck; and if we keep him in the house, he will soon feel perfectly at home, and familiar with us all. But why does my little Jennie choose a lamb?"

"Because, mother," she timidly replied, "I have read a great deal about lambs in the Bible. The Saviour is called the Lamb, and my little pet will always remind me of him. And besides, mother, a lamb is so gentle and loving in its nature. Oh! I would a great deal rather have a lamb."

Mrs. Melville was deeply touched to discover how thoroughly imbued the child's heart was with religious feelings, and that the recollection of her Saviour was so constantly present to her mind that the thought of him blended even with her amusements.

Addressing herself to her other child, she said—

"Are you satisfied now, Bessie, with re-

gard to your sister's reasons for preferring a lamb? and do you think her choice as unaccountable as you did a moment ago?"

No answer came; and Mrs. Melville looked round for her, but Bessie was not there; she had quietly disappeared. The mother and child did not resume the conversation, and both sat absorbed in their own reflections. In a few minutes, Bessie returned, and Mrs. Melville said—

"Where have you been, my daughter?"

"To ask God's forgiveness, mother; and as He promised to forgive me, I believe He has done it."

"This, my child, is Faith; a simple, trusting belief, that God means what He says, and will do what He promises."

Jennie looked up, and asked wonderingly—

"Is this all that faith is, mother? I thought it was some very hard thing. If this is faith, I have it, for I do believe that God will do every thing He promises; but I never knew before that a little child, like I am, could have faith. I have heard Mr. Kennedy say, that nobody could be a

sincere Christian without it; but as I did not know what it was, I thought I should have to wait until I should grow up to be a woman, before I could have it."

"That, my child, is a mistake which is made by a great many persons much older than you are. You are just as capable of exercising faith as I am; and the Saviour himself thought so, because He told his disciples that all who wished to serve Him, and go to heaven, must become like little children; that is, they must be as teachable, and gentle, and loving, as children are; and more than this, they must lean upon their heavenly Father with the same affectionate dependence with which a little child leans upon its earthly parent. Jennie, my dear, when you want any thing, no matter what it is, to whom do you go for it?"

"To you, mother."

"Do you ever think, when you come to me for some very little thing, that I will be angry with you, and send you away, and tell you I will not be troubled with such small matters?"

"No, mother, you have never told me so yet; and I do not think you ever will."

"Neither is God angry with us for asking him for any thing we want. He does not always give it to us, any more than I always give you what you ask for; but, Jennie, why do I ever refuse to give you any thing?"

"Because, mother, you do not think I ought to have it."

"Precisely so, my dear. I would, at any personal sacrifice, give you every thing in my power which would make you better and happier; and it always grieves me to be obliged to refuse you. Do you not believe this, Jennie?"

"Yes, mother, *that* I do," earnestly responded the child.

"Well, my dear, so it is with God. All of us, old and young, very often ask him to give us what He knows it would be very wrong for us to have. Now God is not angry with us for asking, because we do not know that we ought not to have it; but He is so wise, that He knows all things; and it would be just as unkind for

God to give us what would injure us, just because we would like to have it, as it would be for me to give you what would make you sick, because you asked me for it. Now, Jennie, I am never angry with you for asking me for any thing; but if I refuse to give it to you, is it right for you to sit down and cry, and complain that your mother does not love you?"

"Oh, no, mother! I should never think about doing that."

"So then, my dear, God is never angry with us for asking; but when He does not give it to us, He is very much displeased if we murmur and repine, and say He does not love us. Now, Jennie, this is faith; a loving, child-like dependence upon God for every thing; a willingness to go to him, and ask him even for the smallest blessings; and a trusting belief that He will surely give them to us, if it is right we should have them; and when He does not grant us what we desire, a calm, sweet assurance, that like a tender and affectionate Father, as He is, He has only refused us, because He knew that what we had

asked for would certainly injure us."

Jennie looked thoughtfully into the fire, and after a few moments, said—

"Mother, if I feel so, have I faith?"

"Yes, my darling, most certainly you have."

The child mused again, and then said—

"Must I have any thing beside faith to make me a good Christian?"

"One thing more, my child: repentance."

"What does that mean, mother?"

"It means sorrow, Jennie; real, heartfelt sorrow, whenever you do any thing that displeases God."

"Why, mother, I do not think it is very hard to feel this. I have always, all my life, been sorry when I was naughty."

Mrs. Melville looked fondly and approvingly at her little daughter, for she knew she spoke the truth. Her conscience had always been very tender, and she was ever pained and grieved whenever she did the least thing which she thought would displease God. At length her mother said—

"Repentance, my dear, means that kind

of sorrow which will make us very much afraid of doing the same thing over again; and will make us ask God very earnestly and constantly to help us to avoid that sin in future. And besides this, Jennie, it is a sorrow for offending God, not because we are afraid He will punish us, but because we have grieved and disobeyed so merciful and loving a Father."

Jennie thought a little while, and then repeated, musingly, "Faith means to love and trust in God, as I do in mother; and repentance means to be very sorry when I do wrong, and to try very hard not to do it again. What else does it take, mother, to be such a Christian as the Saviour loves?"

"Nothing, my dear."

Jennie looked up, her large eyes dilated with astonishment, and putting her little cheek close up to her mother's, she timidly whispered—

"Am I a Christian, indeed, mother?"

"If you have repentance and faith, my darling, you certainly are."

"Mother," she said, earnestly, "if you

have told me all that is meant by repentance and faith, I think I have both."

Mrs. Melville clasped her tightly to her bosom, and said—

"I believe, my precious child, that you have. I believe that you are a good little Christian, and I thank God that He has thought it right to give me this blessing. It is, my dear, what I have asked him every day since you were born, to make you; and I have never doubted that He would do it. There is one other thing I must add, Jennie: it is, that you must know and feel that, no matter how much you try, you never can do any thing to *deserve* to go to heaven. Although you are a little child, yet you are a sinner; and if you were to die now, young as you are, you could not go to heaven, unless your merciful and loving Saviour had come down into this world, and been punished in your place. And all the blessings which God gives you here, and all He ever will give you in heaven, will be, not to reward you for your goodness, but it will only be giving to you the blessings which the Sa-

viour earned for you by becoming a man, and as a man, keeping all the commandments, and dying for you."

To this Jennie replied—

"I would a great deal rather, dear mother, have it this way than not. Christ never did, and never could do, what was wrong; and I will be more certain to go to heaven, if I go on his goodness, than if I tried to go on my own. Won't I, mother?"

"Yes, my child, you certainly will. Every day, and every hour, you and I do something wrong; and if only those could ever go to heaven who deserved to go, not one human being from our sinful world could ever reach that blessed home. Now, Jennie, besides having repentance and faith, can you trust only in your Saviour's righteousness, and expect to go to heaven only for his merits?"

"Oh, yes!" cheerfully replied the child, "that I can. I always loved the Saviour, ever since I first read about his loving little children, and taking them in his arms; and I shall love him now more than ever, if He will let me go to heaven on his good-

ness, because then I know I cannot fail to get there."

Mrs. Melville looked at the child's earnest countenance, lighted up as it was with an expression of loving trust; and a pang shot through her breast, at the agonizing thought—

"She cannot stay long here; for it is written, 'Of such is the kingdom of heaven.'"

After a few minutes' silence, Mrs. Melville said—

"Jennie, mother is very glad you chose a lamb instead of a bird. You said it would remind you of that Saviour who is called the Lamb. Must mother tell you what the little pet will always remind her of?"

"Yes, mother, I would like to know."

"In one part of the Bible, the Saviour is called the Shepherd; and it is said this gentle Shepherd will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom. And whenever I look at your little lamb, I will always think of my precious little Jennie, folded in the Saviour's arms, and

shielded in his bosom from every thing that can injure or annoy her."

Bessie had been sitting quietly during this conversation, but she had not listened very attentively to it; for her thoughts were now almost wholly occupied with the pleasant anticipation of the canary bird which would belong to her on the morrow. As soon as her mother and Jennie seemed to have finished talking, she said—

"Mother, are you going with me to-morrow to buy my bird?"

"Indeed, Bessie," replied Mrs. Melville, "I had not thought any thing about that. Can you not go with Robin, and let him select one for you? You know he raises mocking-birds to sell, and, of course, he will know more about purchasing a sound, healthy one, than I would."

"Well, mother, I would like for him to go along, to bring the cage home; and if you do not care to go yourself, I thought, perhaps, you would let me go with Susie Danvers and her mother. They are going after school to-morrow morning."

"I have no objection to that arrange-

ment, my dear. But before you go, you must come home and get a clean apron, and brush your curls a little; for you know, Bessie, you do not always look very tidy after playing about with the girls during the recess."

"Well, I will, mother," replied Bessie.

"And after dinner to-morrow," said Mrs. Melville, "I will send Robin down to the plantation, to see if a lamb can be found there for Jennie."

"Mother," said Jennie, "Bessie is going to choose her bird. Could I choose my lamb, too? Day after to-morrow is Saturday; suppose we go down to the plantation ourselves, and get one."

"Well, my dear," said her mother, "if Saturday is a bright, clear day, and not so cold as to make me afraid to take you out, we will ride down to the plantation. I think it will do both my little girls good, and I am glad you thought of it. But, Jennie, I do not wish you to feel certain of getting a lamb now. I shall be very sorry to see you disappointed, and I am really very much afraid that you will have to

wait two or three months yet, before you will be able to get one."

"Oh! I hope not," replied Jennie. "I am so anxious to have my pet, and I do so much want to have him now."

Bessie bounded about for joy. The purchase of a bird, and a trip to the plantation, on two consecutive days, seemed rather more pleasure than she could enjoy quietly; and she felt obliged to give vent to the exuberance of her delight, by clapping her hands and capering over the floor, and saying again and again—

"I am so happy; oh! I am *so* happy!"

CHAPTER III.

BESSIE always slept in a little couch, close beside her mother's bed. Impetuous, as she generally was, yet, whenever Jennie's comfort was concerned, she seemed to have all the forethought of maturer years. She knew that her delicate little sister enjoyed her morning slumber more than the sleep of the whole night, and she was particularly careful never to do any thing to disturb her. At the earliest dawn of the next morning, Mrs. Melville felt a little hand laid gently upon her cheek. Bessie was kneeling on the couch, close beside her, and as her mother opened her eyes, whispered, "Mother, do you not think Fanny is very late making the fire this morning?"

"Why, my love, it is quite dark yet. What makes you in such a hurry to get up this morning?"

"Oh, mother!" said she, "I have been

dreaming all night about birds and lambs ; and I have been awake a long time, and am tired . trying to go to sleep again ; so I want to get up."

" But, Bessie," whispered her mother, " you cannot get up until the fire is made ; and I wish you to lie very still, and not talk any more. Poor little Jennie had a fever last night, and did not rest well ; and now that she is sleeping so quietly, I would like for her to have a sweet, refreshing nap."

This was a sufficient quietus for Bessie. She whispered, " Poor little Jennie ! I am so sorry she is sick ;" and covering herself up snugly in her couch, she lay perfectly still, while visions of beautiful yellow birds, and handsome japanned cages, chased each other in rapid succession through her mind. The time seemed to her interminable, and once or twice she felt sorely tempted to ask her mother if she had not better ring for Fanny ; but a single thought of her sister was sufficient to allay her impatience, and she waited quietly at least, if not patiently, until the

welcome sound of Fanny's approaching脚步 at length greeted her ear. As soon as the fire was made, she asked Fanny if there was one in the dining-room. To this, Fanny replied in the negative. Bessie, although she was so anxious to get up, had yet heroically determined that, rather than disturb her sister, she would lie still in bed until the fire was made in the dining-room, and then run down stairs and dress there. Accordingly, she told Fanny to come and let her know whenever she was ready for her. At last, the time came when she could leave her couch ; she took her little shoes in her hand, for fear of making a noise, and ran shivering down stairs ; and then her tongue was loosed, and her words flowed with a volubility sufficient to atone for the restraint she had imposed upon herself while in her mother's chamber.

After she was dressed, she knelt down, and in her own childish way thanked God for having preserved her through the night, and asked his protection for the ensuing day ; asked him to help her to be a good

child ; but her last, and perhaps most earnest petition was, "Please to make dear Jennie well" by the time she came home from school.

Mrs. Melville had never, from the time her children could frame a sentence, allowed them, as a fixed habit, to say their prayers at her knee, as mothers are so apt to do. She feared lest they might imagine they were praying to her ; and, besides, if anything should prevent her hearing them, they would have become so dependent upon her for the very words they were to use, that without her assistance their devotions must be altogether neglected. She frequently talked to them about prayer, and told them of some things for which they must invariably ask ; and that, besides these, they might go to their heavenly Father, as they would to an earthly parent, and ask for any thing they wanted. Occasionally she would hear their little prayers, fearing, lest in their childish ignorance they might, perhaps, use language so familiar as to become irreverent ; but in most instances she had herself learned a

lesson, instead of giving one, and had ardently wished that she could imitate their simple and affectionate trust.

After her prayer, Bessie seated herself in her chair, and taking her Prayer Book, read the Epistle which came in the regular order.

This plan Mrs. Melville had adopted, because these selections from the sacred volume generally contain some great truth or doctrine, embodied in a few words. She required them to go regularly through with the Epistles and Gospels for Sundays and holy days, reading the Epistle in the morning, and the Gospel at night. Except in the services for Passion Week, these are usually so short, that even a child, altogether averse to religious duties, would scarcely complain of the requisition; and she found that her children, from choice, most generally read both at the same time. As soon as they had read through them all, they began again at the First Sunday in Advent; and in this way, without at any one time taxing their memories to commit a single passage, at the ages of eight

and eleven, they could repeat about half the Epistles and Gospels in the Prayer Book, without being at all conscious when they had learned them.

Bessie had now finished her reading ; her book lay open upon her lap at the Gospel appointed for the Twenty-First Sunday after Trinity, and her finger rested upon the words, "The fever left him."

She was looking intently into the fire, and was so absorbed in thought, that she did not hear her mother's soft footstep approaching. Mrs. Melville walked up very quietly and touched her shoulder ; and as Bessie started, and looked round, her mother said—

" And what is my little daughter thinking so deeply about ? her canary bird, is it not ? "

" No, mother," replied she, sadly. " I had forgotten all about my bird. I was reading about the nobleman's son who was cured by the Saviour, without his ever going to see him ; and he had a fever, too ; just what is the matter with Jennie. And I was wishing, mother, that He was in this

world now, so that I might go and ask him, please to cure her too."

"My child," replied her mother, as her eyes filled, "you can ask him now just as well as the nobleman could."

"Do you mean by praying to him, mother?"

"Yes, my dear, that is precisely what I mean."

"I did that this morning; but, mother, that is not like looking up into his face, and seeing him when I ask him."

"Bessie, my dear, when you pray to your Saviour, do you not believe that He hears you, just as plainly as He heard the nobleman pleading for his son?"

"Yes, mother, I believe it; but I think I would be a little more certain if I could see him."

"I am not surprised, my child, to hear you say this, for all of us, young and old, find it difficult to exercise this faith; but it is what we must try all the time to obtain; and when we kneel down to ask our Saviour for any thing, we must try and realize that He is not far off from us, sit-

ting upon his throne in the heavens, and looking down at us, but that He is standing close by our side, and listening attentively to every word we say."

"Mother, do you always feel this way?"

"No, my daughter. I always desire and try to feel so, but I do not always succeed. But come, Bessie, it is time for prayers."

Mrs. Melville and the little girl read the Psalter for the morning responsively, and then, both kneeling down, Mrs. Melville read some two or three of the prayers which she thought best adapted to their circumstances; among them, the beautiful petition for a sick child; for although her little Jennie seemed but slightly indisposed, still the mother's heart yearned to carry her to that Saviour who alone could give her health and strength. At the conclusion of this prayer, the mother and child together repeated the Lord's Prayer.

When their devotions were concluded, and they had resumed their seats, Bessie said—

"Mother, what is the reason that in the

prayers at home, and in the morning and evening service for the Church, the Prayer Book always puts in the Lord's Prayer?"

"Come here, Bessie, and I will show you."

Mrs. Melville went to the stand, and opened the large Bible at the eleventh chapter of St. Luke's Gospel, and pointed, while Bessie read—

"When ye pray, say: Our Father," &c.

Bessie looked up inquiringly at her mother, who said—

"This is the Saviour's own command; and by it I understand him to mean, not that we shall never pray in any other words, for you know, Bessie, I have always tried to impress upon you that you may ask God for any thing in any words, provided they are reverent. But Christ means to tell us to use this prayer, beside the one which we make for ourselves, and therefore the Prayer Book introduces it into every act of worship, whether in the Christian's private devotions, at the family altar, or in the public services of the sanctuary. Now, Bessie, in one part of the Bible, God says,

‘Thou shalt not steal ;’ in another part of the same book, the same God says, ‘ When ye pray, say :’ and I do not think we have any more right to set aside one of these commandments than the other. Remember, my child, I do not say it is as great a sin to neglect saying the Lord’s Prayer, as it is to steal ; but I do say, that I think we have no right to disregard either command ; and the Prayer Book seems to proceed upon the principle, that nothing which God has deemed sufficiently important to command, is to be lightly esteemed by us ; and, therefore, while it appoints that ‘the weightier matters’ of the law, the Ten Commandments, are to be rehearsed to the people at every morning service, it likewise provides that the smaller injunction shall also be attended to, and the Lord’s Prayer occupy, as the Saviour has expressly told us, a prominent place in all our devotions.”

Breakfast was now brought in, and after she had finished her meal, Bessie took her spelling-book, and looked over her lesson, and studied again the first line in the mul-

tiplication table, which formed all her appointed task. As her mother tied on her bonnet, and kissed her before she started, she said, smilingly—

“I suppose, Bessie, I need not repeat to-day my regular injunction to you, not to loiter after school, but to come home as soon as you are dismissed.”

“Oh, mother! I will be certain to come very quickly to-day, for I am almost crazy now to go for my bird. I wish it was dinner-time.”

So saying, the child seized her little satchel, and tripped gaily along to school, with her cheeks glowing in the bracing air.

Mrs. Melville returned immediately to her chamber, to see about her little invalid. She kept the room so darkened that she could see neither to read nor sew; and wearily the hours passed, as she sat thinking with an aching heart of that storm of anguish which she foresaw, none the less clearly because the cloud which threatened it was now no larger than a man’s hand. She tried earnestly to shake off these

gloomy apprehensions, and to trust her child entirely to the keeping of her Saviour; but Mrs. Melville, though a sincere Christian, was still a woman and a mother, and she could not look without agony upon the blight which she saw so surely falling upon her child. Ah! absolute submission to God's will is a hard thing to attain to.

Hour after hour passed, and still Jennie slept. At last, Mrs. Melville began to fear lest this sleep might be unnatural, and she crept quietly to the bedside, and stood for several minutes watching the little slumberer, who seemed to be enjoying a sweet and refreshing repose.

At length, she awoke, and asked her mother, in a languid voice, if it was not almost breakfast-time?

"If you had said dinner-time, my dear," replied her mother, "you would have been much nearer right. You have slept a long, long time. I am looking every moment for Bessie to come from school."

"Oh, mother! why didn't you wake me up? I am so sorry I missed going to school. I will jump up now and dress

quickly, so as to be ready to go with Bessie after dinner."

"No, you will not, my darling," said her mother. "I have no objection to your getting up, if you wish it; but you have been very feeble for the last few weeks, and last night you had a fever. I am going to let you stay at home a while, and keep me company, until you grow rosy-cheeked and strong, like Bessie. Do you feel well enough to get up now, or shall I have your breakfast brought to you in bed?"

The word "tired" was the epithet which Jennie always used to express debility and exhaustion; and she now replied—

"I would rather get up, mother; but I feel very, very tired this morning. I do not feel as if I had been asleep at all."

Mrs. Melville felt her pulse, and found that the fever was gone, but her forehead and hands were moist with the dew of that heavy perspiration so peculiar to the disease, and so exhausting to the strength. She persisted, however, in her determination to get up; she was just dressed,

and her mother was brushing her long curls, when Bessie rushed into the room, pulled the bell violently, then threw up the window-sash, and called loudly for Fanny to come quickly, and finally commenced pulling off her apron in the greatest haste.

Mrs. Melville waited, as she usually did, until her hurry and bustle had partially subsided, and then said, very gently— .

“Bessie, are you not going to speak to your sick sister?”

Impulsive in every thing, Bessie now ran up to Jennie, and putting her arms around her, kissed her repeatedly, and said—

“Oh, Jennie! I am so sorry I did not see you when I first came in; but Susie Danvers and her mother are waiting for me, and I was in such a hurry that I did not see or think about any thing.”

Fanny now came in with Bessie’s clean white apron, and in a few minutes she was ready to go.

“I will not be gone long, Jennie,” said she, as she bounded out of the room, “and

I will bring such a beautiful bird home with me."

As the gate closed after her, Mrs. Melville exclaimed—

"There! the thoughtless child has gone without any money, and has forgotten to take Robin to bring her bird home."

So saying, she sent for Robin, gave him her purse, and told him to follow immediately, and he would soon overtake Bessie.

About an hour had passed. Jennie was sitting with a little table before her, on which sat her breakfast, which she was vainly endeavoring to eat. A nice hot muffin, a soft-boiled egg, and a cup of fragrant tea, all combined in vain to tempt her appetite. She was trying to coax herself to eat, when she heard Bessie's merry ringing laugh. An instant more and she was in the room, Robin following close behind, carrying a large handsome cage, within whose spacious limits sported a beautiful yellow bird, with a ring of black delicately pencilled around his neck.

Jennie's languid eyes lighted up with pleasure, as she exclaimed—

"Oh, what a beauty he is!"

"But, Jennie," said Bessie, "just wait until you hear him sing; you never heard anything like it in your life."

As she ceased speaking, the little songs-ster mounted on the highest perch, and throwing his head back, he sang, and warbled, and trilled, until the whole room seemed filled with an atmosphere of liquid harmony.

Jennie clapped her thin white hands with delight, and said—

"Oh! he does sing so beautifully. I am so glad, Bessie, that you have got him."

"I am glad, Jennie, that you are pleased with him, and think he is pretty. Do you know what name I am going to give him?"

"No," said Jennie. "I do not know any name pretty enough for him."

"I do," replied Bessie. "I am going to call him Jennie, after you, and Lind, after the great singer; so his name will be Jennie Lind."

Robin laughed, and showed a row of very white teeth, as he said—

"That will never do, Miss Bessie. You cannot give your bird that name, because it is a male bird."

But Bessie could see no impropriety in calling her pet (male bird though it was) after her sister; so she persisted in her determination, and accordingly he was ever afterwards known by the name of Jennie Lind.

"And, mother," said Bessie, "just think; the man only asked me fifteen dollars for the bird and cage, and the beautiful Bohemian glass fountain and all; wasn't it cheap, mother?"

Mrs. Melville smiled, as she replied—

"I cannot say, my dear, that I think it was very cheap. It seems to me that is a good deal of money to pay for one bird; however, if it pleases my little daughter, and makes her happier, I shall not regret that I have spent it. Jennie, now that you have seen Bessie's bird, and heard how sweetly and merrily he sings, perhaps you will change your mind and prefer to have one just like it, instead of a lamb?"

"No, mother," answered Jennie, "I still want a meek, gentle little lamb. I

can look at Bessie's bird and hear him sing, just as well as if he belonged to me; and my little lamb I can take with me wherever I go. I shall teach him to follow me all about. Mother, may we go to the plantation to-morrow?"

"Yes, my love, if the day is pleasant, and you are well enough."

After dinner, while Bessie was preparing for school, Mrs. Melville called her to her side, and said—

"I hope, my dear, you and Mary Granville do not cherish any ill feelings towards each other on account of what occurred at school yesterday; how is it, my daughter?"

Bessie looked ashamed, as she replied—

"I did not have anything to say to her, mother. She looked cross at me, as if she did not want to speak to me; so I let her alone, and said nothing."

"Oh, Bessie, Bessie," said her mother, "how grieved I am to hear that you have refused to speak to a little companion. My child, you ought to try very, very hard to get such feelings out of your young heart. The blessed Saviour, when

he was in this world, although he was so persecuted, never acted so towards any human being; but more than this, when those same persecutors came to him to heal their sick friends, or to do them any favor, they always found him ready and willing to help them. My dear little daughter, your mother is really distressed, but your heavenly Father is more grieved and displeased than I am."

"Mother," replied Bessie, "I was perfectly willing to speak to Mary, and I do not feel unkindly towards her now, but I was afraid from her looks that she would not speak to me, and you know it would make me feel very badly for her to treat me so before all the girls."

"Now, Bessie, I dare say Mary felt just as you did. Both of you were willing to speak; neither felt any resentment, but each one had too much pride to be the first to acknowledge her error. Now, my child, I am going to tell you what is right, and what I wish you to do. I want you, when you go to school this afternoon, to go up to Mary, and offer her your hand, and tell

her you are very sorry for what you said to her at the church yesterday; ask her to forgive you, and be your friend again. Will you do this, my daughter?"

Bessie slowly shook her head, and said—

"Oh, mother! that will be very hard to do."

"Yes, my dear, it will not be very pleasant; but suppose God, instead of telling us in the Bible that if we confess our sins he will certainly forgive us, should say that we are so very wicked, and it is so hard for him to pardon us, that he will not do it at all; what then, Bessie?"

"Oh, mother!" said she earnestly, "that would be too dreadful! Then after we had committed one sin, we might as well stop trying to go to heaven, for we could never get there."

She paused an instant, and then compressing her lips, as if trying to fix her determination unalterably, she said with firmness—

"I will do it, mother. I will go this minute, before school begins. I wish Mary was here now, for I am afraid I will get

out of the notion before I see her. But, mother, suppose she will not speak to me, it will make me feel very badly, and I expect I will get angry again, and say something naughty."

"I have no idea, my child, that Mary will refuse to speak to you; and even if she should, you must not get angry at all, but feel satisfied that you have done your duty. And as to your getting out of the notion, as you say, I hope you cannot be so easily deterred from doing what you know you ought to do; but if you should, just think how much God has forgiven you, and I venture to say it will instantly put to flight every feeling of unkindness towards Mary. But come, my dear, it is high time you were going."

Bessie kissed her mother and Jennie, but she was now so troubled that she did not even take a farewell look at her bird. She started to school very rapidly, but had not proceeded far before she slackened her pace, and was soon so deeply absorbed in her own reflections, that she was entirely unconscious how slowly she was walking.

A rapid step on the pavement behind her was unheeded, and she started as a well-known, manly voice said—

“And what is my little friend Bessie in such a brown study about?”

Her face flushed as she looked up and answered very seriously—

“I am in a great deal of trouble, Mr. Kennedy.”

The good minister could not forbear smiling, for there was something irresistibly ludicrous in the child’s appearance and manner; but he saw instantly that whatever the trouble might be, she, at least, considered it very serious, so he took her affectionately by the hand, and said—

“Well, Bessie, let me hear what is the matter; perhaps I may be able to help you out of your distress.”

Bessie detailed with scrupulous exactness every particular of her difficulty with Mary Granville, and all that had since occurred with reference to it between her mother and herself, and finally concluded by telling him of the exceedingly painful duty she had now to perform.

Mr. Kennedy heard her patiently and kindly, and when she had finished, said gently—

“I am very sorry two little friends should disagree, but particularly sorry they should have quarrelled in God’s own house. Your excellent mother has given you the very best advice throughout. You have followed it in every other particular, you will do so in this, will you not, Bessie?”

“Yes, sir,” said Bessie, “I will do what she wishes me to do, because I know it is right; but I wish there was some other way that was just as right, and easier to do. Isn’t there any, Mr. Kennedy?”

“No, my little girl,” said he, “I do not know any way to settle this difficulty except by frankly acknowledging your fault. The longer you put it off, Bessie, the harder it will be, and you have no idea how much lighter your heart will feel when this duty is done. I do not know any burden more intolerable than a weight of unkind feeling pressing down upon the soul. Take my word for it, Bessie, after you have done

what your mother advised, your little heart will be at rest; the cloud which has now settled upon your face will brighten into sunshine, your step will regain its elasticity, and you will be little Bessy Melville once more. You do not seem like yourself now, and it is only because your conscience tells you that you have done wrong, and that there is an unforgiven sin pressing upon your soul."

Bessie walked on a little way in silence, and then said in a most piteous tone—

"I do wish it was not so hard to do right."

Mr. Kennedy was again sorely tempted to laugh at the despairing manner with which she took up her cross, but she was so much in earnest that he restrained his mirth, and said very seriously—

"It is generally hard for both young and old to do right. We often find it easy enough to do wrong, but whenever we set out to please God, and do his will, we find a cross to take up at almost every step. But, my dear child, let us for one instant compare the self-denial you are about to

practise for Christ with the self-denial which He practised for you. You know that He left his blessed home in heaven, and spent thirty-three long years in this world of sin and suffering. He endured persecution, and disgrace, and cruelty, and yet amid it all he never complained. 'He opened not his mouth.' He loved you well enough to sacrifice the happiness of a whole lifetime for you; will you not love him well enough to sacrifice the feelings of a moment in order to please him?"

"Yes, Mr. Kennedy," replied she, "I will; but," she added, as if afraid her minister would think better of her than she deserved, "remember, I cannot be anything more than just willing to do it. I suspect I ought to feel anxious to do what I know will please the Saviour, who has done so much for me; but I do not; I am just barely willing."

Mr. Kennedy admired the child for her frankness, and said—

"Well, my dear, it has been a very hard struggle for you to attain even this willingness; and the more disagreeable the duty,

the more will the Saviour love you for performing it, if you do it with a simple desire to fulfil his holy will."

They had now reached the school, and as Mr. Kennedy shook her cordially by the hand, he said—

"Bessie, have you a Prayer Book at school?"

"Yes, sir," replied she, "we read in it, and our teacher uses it every morning for prayers."

"Well, my child, as soon as you go to your seat, turn to the Fourth Sunday after Easter, and read the Collect. You will find something in it that will suit your case."

Bessie found to her regret that the exercises had begun. She was extremely fearful with regard to the stability of her resolution, and was very anxious to have performed her disagreeable duty without delay, lest she should, as she expressed it, "get out of the notion" before school was dismissed. However, she had now no alternative except to wait patiently, and by way of fortifying her resolution more

strongly, she took her Prayer Book, according to Mr. Kennedy's advice, and turned to the Collect for the Fourth Sunday after Easter. She had only to read about three lines before she perceived to what he alluded, and as her eyes rested upon the words, "Grant unto thy people that they may love the thing which thou commandest," she felt a sincere desire really to wish to do what God now commanded her. At length school was dismissed, and Bessie waited with a throbbing heart to see Mary Granville start home, thinking that she would run and overtake her, and make her explanation as they walked along together. But, to her disappointment, Susie Danvers and Mary left the school-room together. Bessie had a dread of settling her difficulty in the presence of a third person, and was already beginning to wonder if to-morrow morning would not do as well; but then she remembered that to-morrow was Saturday, and she was going to spend the day in the country, and could not possibly see Mary; the next day was Sunday, and as they at-

tended different churches, there was no probability they would meet then; so, unless everything was settled at once, she must remain in this uncomfortable frame of mind until Monday; and finally, she remembered what Mr. Kennedy had told her, "The longer you put it off, the harder it will be;" and, thought she, "If it is ever any harder to do than it is now, I know I'll never do it."

All these reasons urged her to the immediate performance of her duty, and at length, with desperate resolve, she started after Mary, and for fear of giving way, ran as fast as she could go, so that she had no time to waver before she had overtaken the little girls. Her heart beat rapidly, and her voice trembled, as she resolutely extended her hand, and said—

"Mary, I am very sorry for what I said to you at the church yesterday. I know it was very wrong, and I hope you will forgive me."

"That I will, Bessie," said Mary, frankly and cordially. "I think I behaved a great deal worse than you did, and I was

sorry a minute afterwards for what I had said, but I was in too bad a humor to say so. I would have spoken to you this morning, but I thought you looked as if you did not want to have any thing to say to me, and so I wasn't going to have any thing to say to you."

"Why, Mary," said Bessie, "that is the very thing I thought about you; but you see we were both wrong, so let us kiss and be friends."

The little girls, now that they were reconciled, were unusually affectionate, and the trio walked along in great glee. Presently Mr. Kennedy met them, and, as he approached, Bessie called out joyously—

"It is all fixed, Mr. Kennedy; it is all fixed, and I am so glad."

Mr. Kennedy smiled affectionately, and placing one hand on the head of each, he said—

"I am very glad my little children have settled their difficulty, and I sincerely trust they will never fall out again. Bessie, you do not look like the same child

with whom I parted at the school this afternoon."

"Oh, no! Mr. Kennedy," said she, "and I am sure I do not feel like the same one. My heart was so heavy then, and now it is as light as a feather."

"I thought it would be so," replied Mr. Kennedy. "But, Bessie, where is Jennie, to-day? She was not with you as you went to school, and she is not here now."

"She is sick, Mr. Kennedy; she had a fever last night."

"I am very sorry to hear that," said the minister. "I wish I had known it before, and I would have gone to see her to-day."

"Come, go now with me," said Bessie.

"I cannot, my dear, for I have an engagement this evening; I will come round in the morning."

"No, sir, you need not do that, for if Jennie is well enough to ride, mother is going to take us to the plantation. She thinks it will be good for Jennie."

"I dare say it will. I will come to-morrow evening after you get back, and take tea with you, for I have not seen my

little pet Jennie for several days, and now that I have heard she is sick, I feel especially anxious to see her."

"Oh! do come, Mr. Kennedy," said Bessie, eagerly, "we will all be so glad to see you. Can't you let Mrs. Kennedy come, too? and please to bring Willie. Jennie will be a great deal more pleased to see you if you bring him with you."

"Well, Bessie, it shall all be just as you have arranged it. You may tell your mother that we will all take tea with her to-morrow evening."

So saying, he pursued his walk down the street, and the children went home.

As soon as Bessie entered the house, before she had found out in what part of it her mother was, she commenced calling—

"Oh, mother, mother! Mary Granville and I have made it all up. We are the best kind of friends now."

"I am very happy to hear it, Bessie," said her mother, as the child rushed into the room. "Are you not glad that you followed mother's advice?"

“Yes, that I am, for my heart feels as light as a feather, and I am as happy as a queen.”

CHAPTER IV.

SATURDAY morning dawned as bright and cloudless as the children themselves could have desired, and again Bessie crept very quietly down stairs so as not to disturb Jennie's morning nap. She found Jennie Lind, whose cage was hanging just where the bright morning sun shone upon it through the window, singing and trilling at the very height of his voice, and she very carefully closed the door, so that the sound might not reach her sleeping sister. She had just finished her devotions, and was watching Fanny feeding her bird, when her mother and Jennie came in.

Jennie looked very pale and feeble, and Bessie asked if she felt well enough to go to the plantation.

"Oh, yes!" replied she; "I must go, for

now, since your bird has come, I am so anxious to get my pet, too."

Nothing more was said, for Mrs. Melville told the children it was time for prayers, and immediately they were very quiet and orderly.

Fanny was sent out to call in the other servants, who all seated themselves quietly and respectfully, listened attentively to the Psalms, and joined in the Lord's Prayer. After the exercises were concluded, as they were going out of the room, Mrs. Melville told Robin that she wanted the carriage after breakfast, to go to the plantation.

The little girls enjoyed the ride very much. Even Jennie's delicate frame seemed to expand with new strength and vigor, as she inhaled the pure, bracing air of a clear bright winter's day.

As soon as they reached the plantation, the servants thronged around them to give them a hearty welcome, and seemed to take quite as much pride in extending to them the hospitalities of the place as if they themselves were the owners, and

Mrs. Melville and her children their guests.

A very large basket was brought from the carriage, containing separate packages of sugar, coffee, and flour, for each household, and as these were distributed by the hands of their impartial mistress herself, the servants all looked satisfied and grateful for their Christmas presents.

After this distribution, Mrs. Melville proposed going into the house, but Jennie's usually patient disposition could brook no longer delay; so she said—

“Please, mother, may we not go now and choose my lamb?”

“Are you not cold, Jennie? do you not think it would be better to warm your hands and feet first?”

“Oh, no, mother! I am quite warm; but,” she added instantly, with her usual consideration for the comfort of others, “if you and Bessie are cold, I can easily wait.”

“No, my child,” said her mother, “it was solely on your account that I proposed going to the fire. I am quite comfortable,

and I am sure Bessie has but little the appearance of suffering with cold. So come, my children, we will go now."

Mrs. Melville requested Robin to take Jennie in his arms, fearing lest her feet might become cold and damp. The sturdy old man picked up the light form of the child, and saying, good-humoredly, "Why, Miss Jennie, you are no heavier than a lamb yourself," he trudged along with Mrs. Melville and Bessie.

A troop of some eight or ten little blacks went before, who, anxious to do something, had volunteered to guide their mistress along a path which she had trodden often before most of them were born.

They then proceeded to the fold, where a choice was very soon made, inasmuch as Mrs. Melville proved right in her expectation that there would be but very few from which to select. There were only four; but it happened that one of these was purely white, beautifully formed, and very playful. All were unanimous in agreeing that he was just exactly such a one as would do for Jennie's pet; and after some

resistance, one of the stoutest boys succeeded in capturing him. Robin resumed his light burden, and they all went back to the house again, and Jenny requested the old man to wash her little pet white and clean. After he had gone to do it, Mrs. Melville suggested to the children that they should go round to the cabins, to visit those of the servants who were sick, or incapable from their extreme age of working out. To this they readily assented, and Jennie proposed that they should first go to see old Aunt Sally. They found the old woman sitting by a good fire, rocking herself very comfortably, and knitting most industriously. Her head was enveloped in a clean white handkerchief, upon which rested a pair of old-fashioned silver spectacles, and in her lap was a dirty leaf from a book, whose well-worn and well-thumbed corners testified to a faithful and constant use.

The old woman seemed delighted to see them, shook them cordially by the hand, and, with the privilege which, at the South, usually belongs to the oldest of the blacks

on a plantation, took the children in her arms and kissed them; and putting them down again, with a hearty "God bless your little souls," she bustled about to provide chairs for her visitors.

Aunt Sally was not at all deficient in the loquacity of her race; and, supposing that it devolved on her, as hostess, to entertain her guests, she talked on with a rapidity that allowed them no time to interpose a solitary word. When at last her conversational powers seemed somewhat exhausted, Jennie asked what leaf that was in her lap.

"A leaf from the good book, child," replied the old woman, as she handed it to her.

Jennie looked at it, and found it contained a portion of the Sermon on the Mount, the whole of the sixth, and commencement of the seventh chapters of St. Matthew's Gospel.

"Aunt Sally," said Jennie, "what made you tear the leaf out? don't you know it is a sin to tear the Bible?"

"Why, you don't suppose I tore it out,

do you, Jennie? No, indeed, that is all I ever had."

"Why didn't you ask mother to give you a whole Bible?"

"Well, you see, Jennie, I cannot read much. I have to spell almost all the words as I go along; but I have spelled this over so often, that I can read it now as fast as anybody, and I love to read it a great deal better than I would a new page that I would have to spell out again."

"Yes, but Sally," interposed Mrs. Melville, "you know the Bible is God's book, and you ought to be willing to take some trouble to find out what is in it."

"Yes, mistress," replied she, in the simplicity of her ignorance, "that is all true, but this is the way I thought about it. I know that God gave us this Bible, to show us how to get to heaven. Now, you see, I thought that if I did all that is on this leaf, I would be certain to get there; so I could not see what I wanted with any more, but I thought I would just keep reading this over and over, and try all the time to do what it tells me I ought to do."

Mrs. Melville was, for an instant, silenced, for there was a good deal of force in the old woman's reasoning. She thought for a little while how she should answer it, and then said—

"Sally, suppose some one should write you a letter, and tell you that if you would go to New York you should have a thousand dollars: he should then go on and tell you the best way to get there, what route to take, and at what places to stop, and every thing about the journey. This should take up one page of the letter, and the other three should contain a great many words, telling how much the person loved you, how anxious he was to see you, and what a nice comfortable home he had provided for you as soon as you reached New York. Now, Sally, do you think you would read the first page, and as soon as you turned over and began to see that he had finished writing about the money, and the best way to get it, that you would cast it aside with indifference and disgust, and say, that all you cared for was the money, and if you could only get that,

you would be satisfied ; would you be contented always to read that first page, and never care to see what was on the other three?"

"Oh, no ! ma'am," said Sally, "I would not be so ungrateful as that, I would read it all, every word of it."

"Well, Sally, this is just the way you are satisfied to do with regard to the Bible. This is God's letter to us, and it promises to us a far richer reward than all the wealth of this world. It tells us the best way to reach that heavenly city where all this treasure is laid up for us, and offers to us, as a guide and helper on the journey, that blessed Saviour who will not fail to take us there if we only trust him. But more than this, this letter tells us how much God loves us, how anxious He is that we should reach that blessed world, so anxious that He gave his well-beloved Son to be punished in our place, so that we might be rewarded for his sake. And yet, besides this, it tells us what a sweet blissful home God has provided for us in heaven, and how happy we will be there

forever ; and it contains most precious assurances of God's mercy and protection all along the pathway of life. Now, Sally, is it very grateful in you to study one page of this letter all the time, just to find out how you may reach heaven, and not care to read another line of it?"

The illustration had reached the old woman's comprehension ; she shook her head very thoughtfully as she replied—

" You are right, mistress ; you are right. I never thought that way about it before. But if you will give me a Bible, with good large letters in it, I will try and read it, even if I do have to take the trouble to spell out the words."

" I will, Sally, with the greatest pleasure. I will buy one for you on Monday, and send Robin down specially to bring it to you."

Jennie now resumed the conversation.

" Aunt Sally, do you know how to pray ?"

" Why, bless you, child," replied the old woman in astonishment, and perhaps had the interrogator been any other than Jennie, a little indignation might have blended

with her surprise, "to be sure I know how to pray!"

"Do you think you pray for every thing you need?"

"Well, I can't be certain about that. I pray for every thing that I know I stand in need of; I do the best I can, Jennie, and if I don't do right, I believe God will forgive me, because I don't know any better."

"Well, now, Aunt Sally, I have a book at home that has a great many prayers in it for every thing in this world that any body can ever want. Then it has a great deal from the Bible, all the prettiest parts of it; and besides this, a great many beautiful hymns. How would you like to have such a book as that?"

The old woman's eyes sparkled with pleasure, as she replied, "I should like it mightily. Do you say it has the best part of the Bible, and these other things besides? Then I believe, if mistress will let me choose, I will take this book instead of the Bible."

"Perhaps, Sally," said Mrs. Melville, "you would like both."

"Yes, ma'am; but this would be too much to ask. I will be satisfied and very grateful, if you will give me the one Jennie told me about. Hymns, too!" she added, musingly; "I love to sing, and I can learn them by heart. What is the name of this book?"

"It is called the Prayer Book, Sally; and, next to the Bible, it is the best book in the world; for a large part of it is copied from the Bible. But I cannot let you choose even this book instead of the Bible. They ought always to go together, and I will not separate them now, but will give you both."

"I am a thousand times obliged, ma'am," replied Aunt Sally, with tears of gratitude glistening in her eyes. "I will try very hard to spell out both."

Mrs. Melville now looked at her watch, and told her children that they had stayed so long with Aunt Sally, they would scarcely have time to go round to see all the others. As she left the cabin, she turned around and said—

"Sally, there is one place in the Prayer

Book which I will mark with a pencil, and I will turn down the leaf. I wish you to spell this out first, and read it over twice every day, until I come again. Will you do this? It is very short."

"Yes, ma'am, that I will," replied she; and as they left the house, she stood in the door, and they heard her say—

"Well, well! a great deal out of the Bible; a great many prayers, a great many hymns, all in the same book; it must be a wonderful book, indeed!"

They completed their round of visits, and Mrs. Melville spoke words of kindness, sympathy, and advice, to each and all, as their circumstances required; they then returned to the house, where they found Robin and the lamb, which he had washed as white as snow, surrounded by a group of admiring children. Mrs. Melville produced from her pocket a long, beautiful blue ribbon, and taking the little creature in her arms, she tied around his neck the badge which he was henceforth to wear as long as Jennie lived. Trembling with fear, and shrinking timidly from the gaze

of the crowd around, the lamb nestled itself in Mrs. Melville's arms, and looked up into her face with a gentle, pleading expression, as if supplicating her protection. This disposition was the very one most calculated to enlist the affections of little Jennie, herself timid, shrinking, and dependent; and stroking her hand fondly down the back of her pet, she said—

“Oh, mother! you do not know how much I shall love him! I would rather he would look at me once, as he looked at you just now, than to sing two or three days, like Bessie's Jennie Lind.”

Soon after dinner, Mrs. Melville ordered the carriage to go home, for she was anxious to return before sunset, fearing the effect of the chill evening air upon the sensitive frame of her little invalid. It was late when they arrived, but they found a bright cheerful fire which Fanny had made to welcome them, and they very soon became warm and comfortable.

When the excitement was all over, and she found herself at home, the absolute and undisputed possessor of the little lamb,

whose spotless purity and winning ways even exceeded her anticipations, Jennie began to feel that she was thoroughly exhausted, and using her accustomed epithet, "tired," she expressed a desire to lie down upon the sofa. Her mother had just arranged her comfortably, and placed her pet close beside her, when the bell rang, and Mr. and Mrs. Kennedy, with their little son, Willie, were ushered in.

Willie was a fair-haired, blue-eyed, rosy-cheeked boy, with a bright, happy countenance, and a mouth around which the sweetest smile always lingered. There was nothing rude or boisterous about him, as may be readily imagined from the fact that he was the favorite playmate of the gentle, thoughtful, quiet little Jennie. And yet he by no means resembled her in disposition. Full of life, health, and activity, one would have thought that he would naturally have preferred the society of the laughter-loving, frolicsome Bessie, more especially as he was very nearly her age. But it was not so; he had always loved Jennie, and found in her just such

a playmate as his boyish affections demanded; and doubtless the unknown influence of his little companion had done much towards softening down the roughness of a boy's disposition, and while it did not render him any the less a boy in all his feelings, it yet refined and purified his character, by throwing over it somewhat of the softness and gentleness of woman's nature.

As soon as he entered the room, he went directly to the sofa and spoke to Jennie first, and then shook hands with Mrs. Melville and Bessie. He then took a chair and seated himself beside Jennie, and they were speedily joined by Bessie, and the trio had a long, and to them exceedingly interesting discussion upon the comparative merits of lambs and canary-birds, Willie being made fully acquainted with all the circumstances connected with the purchase of the one and the selection of the other. At length their topics of conversation seemed exhausted, and they paused a while to listen to what was said by their elders.

Mrs. Melville asked when the bishop would make his annual visitation, to which Mr. Kennedy replied, in about five weeks; and added, that there were about a dozen persons whom he hoped and believed he would be able to present as candidates for Confirmation. Something was then said about the services of the next day, which was Christmas, when Bessie started from her seat, and running to her mother's work basket, took out the little Prayer Book, and bringing it to the minister, said—

“Please, Mr. Kennedy, show me the place in the Prayer Book where it says that we must dress the church with evergreens on Christmas.”

Mr. Kennedy smiled, as he replied—

“I cannot show it to you, Bessie, for there is no such direction there.”

He looked at the child, and there was such an expression of surprise and mortification upon her countenance, that his gravity was entirely overcome, and he laughed outright and very heartily.

After a little while, she said, with a very rueful face—

"Now, when I see Mary Granville, and tell her that, she will be so glad, and will say, 'There now, Bessie, I told you so, I told you so!'"

"Why, Bessie?" said the minister, still laughing; "surely, after your very recent difficulty, you and Mary have not been discussing church matters again. I am afraid you two little girls might be numbered among those who 'have zeal, but not according to knowledge.'"

"Yes," said Mrs. Melville, "my little daughter is rather too much disposed to be a zealous partisan. I want to see her a warm-hearted, devoted Churchwoman, loving the Church most affectionately, and prizes all its ordinances and privileges, but at the same time, I would rather see her more gentle and winning in her defence of it. Well, Bessie, tell us now what occurred between you and Mary. I should think after your serious misunderstanding the other day, you would both consider the discussion of Christmas decorations a rather dangerous employment."

"Oh, mother!" replied Bessie, "we were

not quarrelling at all, we were only talking. It was after we had made up our difficulty, and had agreed to be the best kind of friends, as we were walking along home, we commenced talking about the evergreens; and Mary asked me where we got the notion of making Christmas wreaths, and I told her, 'out of the Prayer Book, to be sure.' Mary said, 'she would like for me to show her the place, for she did not see why such a thing as this should be in a book called a Prayer Book.' I told her I would ask Mr. Kennedy to find it for me, and would show it to her on Monday. Then she asked me where the Prayer Book got such an idea, and I told her, 'out of the Bible;' and then I said, 'Mary, you may rest assured, that every thing in the Prayer Book is in the Bible, too; if you cannot find the exact words, you will be sure to find the sense.' And now, after all, Mary was right, and I was wrong; what shall I tell her when I see her on Monday?"

Bessie's face resumed its expression of chagrin; and Mrs. Melville and her guests

could not but laugh very heartily. As soon as he could speak, Mr. Kennedy said—

“ Well, Bessie, I think I may safely say, that never before did the Church have so hazardous a champion; and if she had not been so careful to follow the Bible in all her words and ways, you might find it difficult to prove what you said yesterday. Your assertion, however, is literally true with regard to the Prayer Book: ‘if you cannot find the exact words in the Bible, you will be sure to find the sense.’ Now, in this instance, although there is not one word said in the Prayer Book about Christmas decorations, yet it is a time-honored custom of the English branch of the Church to dress it with evergreens at that time as a token of grateful rejoicing on our Saviour’s birth-day. There is no express command in the Bible to do this, but I think we can find a passage which will show us that God himself notices, and is pleased with even this very small indication of our desire to honor him in every thing.”

He took the large Bible from the stand,

and laid it upon his lap; while he was turning over the leaves, Jennie quietly arose from the sofa, and she and Willie stood on one side of Mr. Kennedy, and Bessie on the other, all looking over most intently. He found the sixtieth chapter of Isaiah, and pointing with his finger, that the children might follow him, he read very slowly and distinctly the thirteenth verse.

“‘The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee; the fir-tree, the pine-tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary.’”

Bessie clapped her hands for joy, and exclaimed—

“I am so glad I was right; if it is not in the Prayer Book, it is in the Bible, and that is better still, for Mary does not seem to care about doing any thing because the Prayer Book says so; but just tell her it is in the Bible, and she will give up in a minute.”

“Ah, Bessie!” said Mr. Kennedy, very seriously, “I am afraid you are more delighted to find that you were right in your

assertion, than you are to notice the exact correspondence between the Church and the Bible. Now, my little children, all of you, listen to me ;" (and, as he said this, he clasped three little hands in one of his;) " listen to a word of advice about the way in which you should talk of these things among your young friends.

" I would have you love the Church dearly ; she is God's Church, and Christ loved her, and gave himself for her. She is fair to look upon, and her voice is sweet ; yes, she is a very dear mother, that always speaks the truth, and speaks it most affectionately. Love her, then, as much as you can, and love to talk about her, and do all that you can to make other people admire her too. But avoid a boasting, arrogant way of speaking ; treat the opinions of others with respect and kindness. Little children should be modest and peaceable and gentle ; I think it would be better if they would leave controversy for older heads, and all follow the advice of their parents until they grow up. It was enough for you, dear Bessie, to see your own dear

church in her Christmas dress ; but it was no business of yours to set your neighbors right. When you asked Mary Granville why her church was not decorated, was it the question that made her angry, or was it the way you said it?"

"I am afraid it was the way I said it."

"Well, Bessie, I shall not say any more, lest you may think I am scolding you ; but remember one thing," added Mr. Kennedy, smiling, as he rose to go, "if there is to be any fighting done in my parish, I must arrange the battle ; so, Bessie, do not shake your little fist at your friends who follow not with us, until I let you know that I am ready."

Mrs. Melville detained the minister with a request that he would conduct their evening devotions. To this he readily assented, and after the prayers he talked to them for about ten minutes upon the observance of Christmas, and spoke with great feeling about Him whose humanity was cradled in a manger, and whose birth-place was a stable, but whose divinity "the heaven of heavens cannot contain." His language

was so plain and familiar, that servants and children understood him perfectly, and gained a far more correct appreciation of the use and advantages of Christmas services than they would have done from the most elaborate pulpit discourse.

CHAPTER V.

CHRISTMAS morning dawned—clear, pure, and cloudless; and as Jennie always requested that on Sunday morning she might be awakened early, so as to be ready for Sunday school, Bessie was not under the necessity of placing any restraint either upon her tongue or her movements, but was at liberty to make as much noise and to talk as rapidly as she pleased while she was dressing.

She called out “Christmas gift! Christmas gift!” to every one who crossed the threshold of the room, and then seeing Robin in the yard below, she ran to the window, and, tapping on the pane to call his attention, greeted him with the same salutation.

Mrs. Melville had left her room before the children were up, and returned while Bessie was yet standing at the window.

As soon as she perceived her mother, she repeated the same words, to which Mrs. Melville replied—

“I hope both my little girls will enjoy their Christmas very much; and that as this day combines the holy remembrances of the Saviour’s Nativity with the ordinary privileges of the Lord’s Day, it will be a profitable as well as a pleasant day.”

Bessie waited a little while, and then finding that her mother intended to say no more, she asked—

“Mother, did you not get us any Christmas presents at all? You always have them sitting on the bureau when we get up in the morning, but I have looked all over the room and have not seen any yet.”

“Yes, my child, your mother has not forgotten you; but, Bessie, I want you and Jennie to give me a Christmas present too.”

Jennie unceremoniously darted away from Fanny, who was curling her hair, and putting her arms around her mother’s neck, said—

“I should be too glad, dear mother, to have something to give you. I haven’t

any thing that I care much about except my lamb; but I will give that to you if you would like to have it."

"No, my darling, I do not want your little pet, for I love it a great deal better as yours, than I would if it belonged to me."

"Well, mother, what is it?" interrupted the impetuous Bessie; "what in the world can we give you?"

"I wish you, my little children, to exercise some patience about receiving these presents. This is God's holy day, as well as our Lord's birth-day, and I am very anxious that you should go through with its services understandingly and heartily. I do not wish you to have your gifts before to-morrow; and the Christmas present I desire from you is, that you will acquiesce in this decision of mine, not unwillingly and reluctantly, but pleasantly and cordially. Will you do this, my children?"

Both the little girls seemed to think their mother's request a very moderate one; and both agreed without a moment's hesitation to this arrangement.

Nothing more was said for a few moments, when Bessie, with her accustomed truthfulness, asked—

“ You do not think I promised not to think about my present to-day, do you ? Is that what you meant, mother ? I would be afraid to make that promise, for I know it will come into my mind a hundred times. But I will try my best, mother, and think about it just as little as I possibly can. Will that do, mother ? ”

“ That is all I ask, my dear. I know it will be just as you say ; the thought of that present will come into your mind very many times during the day, and I do not wish you to drive it out by sitting down and saying, ‘ I will not think about it,’ for that will be the surest way to keep it in your mind ; but I wish you to try and be interested in the services, and keep your mind filled with thoughts of that blessed Saviour, who, this day, eighteen hundred and fifty-three years ago, was lying, a little helpless babe, cradled in a manger.”

Bessie, in her prayers that morning, made a special petition that “ God would

help her not to think about her Christmas present all through the day."

The children went to Sunday school, and their teacher took advantage of the wreaths and branches all around them to call their attention particularly to the infancy of our blessed Saviour; and surrounded as they were with the tokens of rejoicing at His birth, it was not difficult to make them realize that it was an actual event, and that He was once as really and truly a human babe, as any other infant they had ever seen.

Before the school was dismissed, the minister addressed the children, and in language adapted to their capacity, told them why Christmas was one of the feasts of the Church, how long it had been observed, and how it ought to be regarded by both young and old. By the time the Sunday school was over the children were very much solemnized, and began to regard the day, not so much as a time set apart for boisterous mirth and foolish merriment, as a season of grateful thanksgiving to Him who "when He took upon him to

deliver man, did humble himself to be born of a virgin."

As is customary in all Episcopal churches on Christmas day, after the usual services in the morning, the Holy Communion was administered. Mr. Kennedy had never adopted the custom practised in our cities and larger towns, of dismissing his congregation before the administration of the Sacrament; for he could find nothing in the teachings of the Bible or Prayer Book to justify him in thus shutting out a large portion of his congregation from witnessing the most solemn and impressive of all the Church's services, and one well calculated to touch and soften even the most obdurate heart.

He had in his church a small choir, which sang very sweetly, without any pretension whatever to great cultivation; and they sang that day, for the first time, the soul-thrilling Trisagion.

Mrs. Melville's children were kneeling on either side of her, and as the voices swelled out the first "Holy," she felt little Jennie start, as if by an electric touch; and

before the last strain had died away, a low, stifled sob from the kneeling Bessie, told how deeply her little heart was touched. Although they remained on their knees long after the music had ceased, yet when they arose, Jennie's mother noted, almost with a feeling of awe, the expression of rapture that lighted up the child's face.

After the services were concluded, the three went quietly out of church, and walked home without exchanging a word. Each seemed absorbed in her own reflections, and it was not until they found themselves seated by the fire in the dining-room, that Bessie said abstractedly, and more as if she were thinking aloud than addressing herself to any one—

“‘Therefore with angels and archangels!’ I never before heard anything half so beautiful as that; I was perfectly melted down, and as if I could cry until my very heart would break.”

“Oh! I did not feel like crying, did you, mother? I felt as if I were almost in heaven, and listening to the very song I

would sing there. Mother, do you not think it is beautiful enough to be sung in heaven?"

"Yes, my daughter, that is precisely the feeling I had when I heard this morning, for the first time, the Trisagion chanted. Among all the chants of our beautiful service, this alone seems to leave out of view our frailties and imperfections. Even the exulting strains of the Gloria in Excelsis and the magnificent Te Deum are subdued and saddened by the penitential confession and the appeal for mercy, and the glorious ascriptions of praise are interrupted by the entreating voice of supplication:—

"‘Thou that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us.’

"‘Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin.’

"But in the Trisagion the soul seems as it were to forget itself for an instant, and to be lost in the transcendent glories of God; to forget that it is still chained down by the fetters of mortality, and encompassed by infirmity and sin; it seems to soar far, far away from this lower world,

and to approach near enough to heaven to catch the echo of the song which angels and archangels sing around the throne, and, involuntarily as it were, lends its own voice to swell the triumphant chant—

“Heaven and earth are full of thy glory. Glory be to thee, O Lord most high.”

“Yes, my child, I verily believe that, if anything we learn on earth will go with us to heaven, it will be the Trisagion.”

“What do you call it, mother?” asked Bessie.

“Trisagion, my dear. It is a long, hard word for a little girl like you to pronounce, but when I tell you its meaning perhaps you can remember it. It is a Greek word, and means ‘thrice holy,’ because in it the word holy is three times applied to God. I said just now, my children, that the soul seemed in this exulting chant to forget for a moment its frailties and sins. But it is only for a moment; and from the very confines of heaven, with the tones of the angelic music still ringing in its ear, the Church teaches it to sink into the very

depths of humiliation and penitence, and to say, in a voice of heart-broken confession—

“‘ We do not presume to come to this thy table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy table.’

“Oh! my children,” added Mrs. Melville, her countenance glowing with animation, “all the books ever written by man, since the creation of the world, do not contain so great sublimity and so touching solemnity as are embodied in that simple transition from the loftiest heights of praise to the lowest depths of contrition. One moment the soul is caught up in an ecstasy of rapture by a glimpse of what it shall be hereafter, the next it is subdued and melted by a realizing sense of what it is now.”

Mrs. Melville ceased to speak, but the glow of excitement still rested upon her face, and Jennie gazed lovingly and admiringly upon those features, on which the traces of youthful beauty still lingered,

and which, when lighted up, as they were now, were truly handsome. At last she said—

“Mother, does it make you happier to go to Communion?”

“Yes, always, my child,” replied her mother, “if I go in a right spirit; but why do you ask, Jennie?”

“Because your face looks so bright and beautiful, dear mother,” replied the child. “You look now as if you were a great deal happier than you are every day, and I could not think of anything to make you so, unless it were going to Communion.”

“Well, my dear, that is precisely what does make me feel happy to-day. I enjoyed all the services more than usual, but it seemed to me that I felt every word of the Communion Service, and realized its preciousness more fully than I ever did before; and I do not think I ever thanked God so heartily as I have done this day, that He has kept me in the fold of our own Church, that He has given me for my own use this beautiful and most

comforting Liturgy, and has taught me how to love it and profit by it."

She paused, and in a little while Jennie said, sadly and imploringly—

"I wish I was only old enough to go to the Communion. I should love to feel as happy, dear mother, as you look."

"Why must you wait, Jennie, until you are older? Why not go now, my child, if you really desire to go?"

Jennie looked at her mother in astonishment, and replied earnestly—

"Oh, mother! I am not good enough yet to go."

"Do you think, my dear, that all who go to that sacred table, go because they are so good?"

"Yes, I thought so, mother. All my acquaintances who go there, I know, are good Christians, and I suppose all the others are, too."

"Well, now, Jennie, take your Prayer Book and find the Communion Service, and let us see if that teaches us that this holy feast is designed for people who feel themselves to be very good."

Jennie opened her book at the appointed place, and looking up at her mother, said—

“It is a long service; what part of it do you wish me to look at?”

“The General Confession,” replied her mother. “But, Jennie, before you read it, just glance at the rubric above it, and see if those persons who use this Confession are the same who receive the Holy Communion.”

Jennie looked at it, and said—

“Yes, mother, for it says, ‘This Confession shall be made by the Priest, and all those who are minded to receive the Holy Communion.’”

“Now, Jennie, read aloud the Confession, and let us see if we think the people who use these words can be very good in their own opinion.”

Jennie read slowly—

“We acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness, which we, from time to time, most grievously have committed, by thought, word, and deed, against thy Divine Majesty, provoking most justly thy wrath and indignation against us. We

do earnestly repent, and are heartily sorry for these our misdoings; the remembrance of them is grievous unto us; the burden of them is intolerable.' ”

“Now, my daughter,” said Mrs. Melville, “are these the confessions of those who are sinners, or of those who might call themselves righteous and good?”

“I should think, mother, they are the confessions of those who are sinners.”

“So they are, my dear; and yet the Church puts these words of self-abasement into the mouth of every communicant, and requires that all who approach that sacred table shall first use these expressions of self-accusation. So then, Jennie, I should rather think the Church expects those who feel that they are great sinners to go to the Communion; wouldn’t you think so?”

“Yes, mother,” replied she, in a tone of mingled doubt and wonder; and after a little pause, she said—

“Then why do not all sinners go, mother?”

“Because, my dear, there are certain feelings which these sinners must have

before they can be welcome guests there. Read the Invitation, Jennie, and see what these feelings are. Christ has only promised a blessing to those who go in a right frame of mind ; and if persons presumptuously go without it, so far from receiving a blessing, they receive a curse even at that feast which a loving Saviour himself has spread. Let us hear the Invitation, Jennie."

She read—

“ ‘ Ye who do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbors, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in his holy ways ; draw near with faith, and take this Holy Sacrament to your comfort.’ ”

“ Now, Jennie, this invitation, to draw near with faith, and take this Holy Sacrament, is addressed to all those who, although they are sinners, are truly sorry for their sins, have no ill-will towards any human being, but have feelings of kindness for all ; and who intend, by God’s grace, to try hereafter and live more in accordance with

his holy will than they ever did before. These are the feelings which every communicant is required to have, and this is all the preparation that is necessary; and every person who goes to that table in this state of mind, anxious to be forgiven, and to be made better, receives a peculiar blessing from the Saviour himself. And as it is a remembrance of our suffering and dying Saviour; as the broken bread reminds us of his broken body, and the wine poured out, of his shed blood; and as we remember that his body was broken, and his blood shed for us, our hearts must glow with affectionate devotion towards him who thus loved us, and gave himself for us, and we must feel heartily sorry for every offence against so loving and tender a Friend."

Jennie looked thoughtfully into the fire for several minutes, and then said rather suddenly—

"Mother, does Mr. Kennedy think as you do about the Communion?"

"Yes, my child; Mr. Kennedy thinks just as the Prayer Book teaches. I have

not, my dear, been giving you my own notions. You have read for yourself the teachings of the Church."

"Mother, you said just now that every communicant who went in the right spirit, received a blessing. What blessing, mother?"

"I cannot tell, Jennie, precisely what blessing he receives; but this I believe, the Saviour gives to each one the blessing which he most needs. For instance, He might give you strength to resist some peculiar temptation which has always before overcome you; He might give me comfort in some heavy bereavement, while to another He might give grace to bear up under some bodily sickness or weakness. The Church teaches us that, while one design of this Holy Sacrament is 'to continue a perpetual memory of his precious death and sacrifice,' it is, besides this, a channel through which the Saviour sends us blessings; such blessings, too, as He gives us, generally, not at other times and in other ways. It is not for us presumptuously to ask why He does this; why He chooses to

convey great blessings to us through so simple a means. We must meekly and thankfully receive 'these innumerable benefits' in his own appointed way, without questioning whether He could bestow them otherwise."

"Oh, mother!" said the child, solemnly and sadly, "how I wish I had known all this before I went to church this morning! I staid away from the Communion table, and perhaps, if I had gone, the Saviour might have given me a blessing, which I will never have now while I live. How I do wish I had known that I could go! I do think, dear mother, that I am sorry for all my sins; I know I have not any unkind feeling towards anybody, and I do earnestly desire to be a Christian, and intend to try to be one all my life. Did you not say, mother, that if I felt this way, I might go to that holy table, even though I am a very little girl?"

"Yes, my dear, I told you so, but not on my own authority. It is the Church, not your mother, who says this."

Jennie seemed to be so much amazed to

find that she possessed all the qualifications for a worthy communicant, that she could scarcely be convinced it was true, and, still afraid that her mother's decision might be too lenient, she asked again—

“I wonder if Mr. Kennedy will think I may go next time?”

“Yes, my darling, he will without doubt, for Mr. Kennedy has neither the disposition nor the power to require more of you than the Prayer Book does. But, my child, he cannot rely on what your mother or any one else may tell him about your views and feelings. He must talk with you himself, and find out how you think and feel about this matter. If you have difficulties, he must help you to remove them, and if your views are wrong, he must show you what is right. He is responsible, in a great degree, for the conduct of those whom he admits into Christ's Church, and though he may be deceived, yet, unless he takes all proper pains to acquaint himself with the feelings and intentions of every one whom he receives into that fold, Christ will be angry with

him, and account him an unfaithful shepherd. Are you willing, my dear, to talk to your minister, and will you tell him all your little doubts and fears just as you tell them to your mother?"

"Yes, ma'am," replied Jennie, "I have no objection to doing this. I love Mr. Kennedy dearly, because he is always so gentle and patient with me. He never seems worried with me when I ask him questions, or thinks it a trouble to explain to me anything I do not understand. Yes, mother, I am perfectly willing to talk to Mr. Kennedy."

They relapsed again into silence, which Jennie was the first to break, by saying—

"Mother, when I go to the Communion, will I be a member of the Church?"

"Yes, my child, but no more than Bessie and you are now, for you were both 'received into the congregation of Christ's flock,' and 'grafted into the body of Christ's Church,' when you were baptized; and do you not remember I explained to you the other day the promises I made in

your stead, and those made by Mr. Kennedy in Christ's stead?"

"Yes, mother, I remember them, and think I understand them, too."

"And do you not recollect, Jennie, I told you that if the child should, in after life, refuse to do what the sponsors promised for him, Christ would not be bound to bless him, as Mr. Kennedy promised He would?"

"Yes, mother, I remember that, too."

"Well, now, Jennie, you and Bessie are, and have been members of Christ's Church ever since your baptism, although you were too young to do many things that older church members are bound to do. Now, however, you are old enough to understand and use all your privileges; and, although participating in the Holy Communion will not make you any more a member of the Church than you are now, still it will show that you own your membership, that you wish to keep the promises which were made for you, and to receive the blessings which were promised you."

Jennie seemed for several minutes en-

tirely lost in thought, and then said—

“ Well! you have often told me before that I was a member of the Church, but I never exactly understood how it could be so, and I never knew before that a little girl like I am could go to the Holy Communion. I have often wished, mother, that I could go along with you, and have felt lonely and desolate when I saw you go without me. But I thought I would have to wait until I was better before I dared to go to that holy sacrament.”

“ This, my child, is a very common and a very fatal mistake with many persons. The Saviour tells us, in the Bible, that ‘He came not to call the righteous, but sinners;’ and in the same way, He did not make a Church for the righteous, but for sinners. You would think it, my child, very absurd for a sick man to send for a physician, and when he came and prescribed for him, to say that he was too sick to take the medicine then but he would take it when he grew better. Just as absurd is it for a person to say, ‘I am too great a sinner to go into the Church,

but I will go into it when I become a better man.' In one case the physician would reply, 'The very way to get better is to take the remedy now ;' in the other case, the very way to become a Christian and a better man, is to go to that place where Christ has concentrated all the means and instruments by which He assists us to be consistent Christians. And as in one case, the sick man would probably never recover at all if he waited to become convalescent before using the prescribed remedy ; so in the other, the man who waits to become very good before he goes into the Church will probably never be a Christian at all. Some persons will say that they can be just as consistent Christians out of the Church as in it, but this is altogether a mistake. In the first place, Christ has expressly commanded, that 'we should confess him before men,' and it is hard to see how one who wilfully refuses to obey so positive an injunction can be a true Christian. Again, Christ has provided in his Church certain means by which He helps us to grow in grace, which cannot be had

elsewhere. There are, it is true, many helps granted to all, both in the Church and out of it, who are sincerely trying to serve God, but there are peculiar assistances given in the sacraments of the Church, which He gives nowhere else, and though, as I told you before, He could give them elsewhere if He pleased, yet He has not promised to do it. Now, no man can be a consistent Christian, who wilfully neglects any of the means which God has provided to assist his growth in grace. It is for these reasons, and these alone, that *Episcopalians* are so anxious to see persons gathered into the fold of the Church. It is not that they place undue stress upon the fact of mere nominal Church-membership, but they do believe, that where a person has in his heart one spark of vital religion, it may be nursed, and fanned into a flame by the holy influences of Church privileges, ordinances, and sacraments; whereas, without these, it will be almost sure to be extinguished by the chilling atmosphere of worldliness. Believe me, my child, it is a fatal error to suppose that

persons can be as good Christians out of the Church as in it. If they could, Christ never would have founded a Church at all; for He, who is infinite in wisdom and 'doeth all things well,' would never have committed the human folly of founding an institution to meet the wants of man, when those wants could be entirely satisfied without it. I have talked long to you, my darling, but I am so anxious that you should clearly understand the uses of the Church; not looking upon it as a spacious platform, upon which all the good of the earth assemble, and say with pharisaic pride to a gazing world, 'Stand back, for I am holier than thou;' but as a sheltering fold, where all the sin-sick, the weary, and the heavy laden congregate, lured by its 'green pastures and still waters,' and by the loving voice of its gentle Shepherd, who promises to them protection and guidance. Have I expressed myself, my daughter, in such a way that you can understand me?"

"Yes, mother; and I am glad you have told me all this. I have always before

had a kind of dread of the Church, but if it is, as you say, 'a sheltering fold,' I shall love to be one of the little lambs in it."

"God grant, my precious child, that such you may ever be. When you were a very, very little lamb, your mother placed you there, and she humbly 'trusts and fervently prays that you may never stray away from it."

Mrs. Melville and her children attended afternoon service, and by the time the day was over, little Jennie was, to use her own expression, "very tired." Beside the usual exercises, Mrs. Melville always at the family devotions on Sunday night expounded to the servants, in familiar language, some passage of Scripture, and permitted them to ask any questions which might occur to them. She selected on this occasion as her subject, the resurrection of Lazarus; this, to the excitable Bessie, was a theme full of interest, and she listened eagerly to all her mother said. When all the duties of the day were over, and they were about to retire, she suddenly exclaimed, "Oh, mother! I have scarcely thought about my

Christmas gift once to-day. It has been a very pleasant Sunday, and the services have so filled my mind that I had entirely forgotten my present."

Mrs. Melville's eyes sparkled with pleasure as she kissed the little girl, and said—

"I am glad to hear you say so, my dear. I love to have the holy Lord's Day rendered pleasant and interesting to you, and I always make a special effort so to vary its employments as to prevent your feeling anything like weariness."

CHAPTER VI.

THE next morning, as soon as Bessie awoke, she sprang out of bed, and, running to the bureau, looked for the present, whose usual place every Christmas was just before the dressing glass, but no present was there. She then gazed all around the room, and seeing nothing new or pretty, turned to her mother with a countenance on which disappointment was plainly written.

Mrs. Melville smiled quietly as she said—

“ My Christmas gift is not all presented to me yet, Bessie ; I wish you to give me a little more patience still, and wait until you are dressed, and prayers are over, and then you shall have your present.”

“ Well, mother,” cheerfully responded the amiable child, “ I think I can do that,

for it will only be waiting a very little while longer."

Her mother stroked her affectionately on the head, and said—

" You are an obedient little girl, Bessie, and mother loves you for it."

Bessie was so delighted with this encomium from her mother, that if Mrs. Melville had asked her at that moment to surrender her Christmas gift altogether, she would probably have done it without a moment's hesitation. But the fond mother had no idea of trying her child's obedience and affection by any unnecessary tests. She only desired that the child should wait until her morning devotions were completed, knowing very well that if she received the present before, these would be very badly performed.

Bessie was dressed, and though strongly tempted to hurry through her prayers, yet she conscientiously determined to ask for just as many blessings as she usually did. When she took her Prayer Book, although her mother only required her to read the Epistle in the morning, and the

Gospel at night, yet, as she was in the habit of voluntarily reading both each time, she determined not to deviate from her usual custom. She then went down into the dining room, where they had family prayers, and immediately after these were over, Mrs. Melville handed her a key, and told her to unlock the door and she would see both her present and Jennie's.

Bessie looked doubtfully at it, and said :
“ Why, mother, you did not mean to give me that; it is the key of the dressing closet.”

“ I know it, my child; but take it, and go and see quickly, for Fanny has gone to send in breakfast. Bessie bounded out of the room, and as she opened the door, and entered the dressing-closet, she uttered a scream of delight, which startled the sleeping Jennie, and awakened her from a deep slumber.

Mrs. Melville had fitted up this little room as a play-house for her children. It was nicely carpeted, and contained two very small mahogany rocking-chairs, cov-

ered with hair cloth, modelled precisely after those in her own parlors. In each of these chairs reclined a large wax doll, handsomely dressed, with bright black eyes and glossy brown curls. In the room was a small French bedstead just large enough for the two dolls. A tiny bureau, wardrobe, and wash-stand, on which stood a very small bowl and pitcher, and a miniature book-case well filled with small volumes of pleasant and instructive tales, completed the furniture of this little apartment. Bessie was in a perfect ecstasy. She took the dolls up and examined their clothes, and the little chairs; then seating them again, she amused herself by opening and shutting the bureau drawers and wardrobe doors; then she took all the books out of the book-case and glanced at their titles; and finally pulled all the cover from the bed, looked at each article separately, tried in vain to discover what the mattress was stuffed with, and then spread everything on again with scrupulous exactness. Her mother sent for her twice to come to breakfast before she could tear

herself away; and then, as she passed through the chamber, seeing that Jennie was awake, she begged her to jump up, slip on her shoes, and run into the dressing closet, just to look for a minute at the beautiful things.

Jennie imprudently complied with her sister's request, and stood shivering with cold, absorbed in contemplating all these proofs of her mother's fond indulgence, until a warning cough sent her hastily back to the fire. The pet lamb was lying comfortably on the rug, and looked up at her with his meek eyes, which seemed to lighten with a beam of recognition. She stooped down, and fondly caressing him, said—

“These things are all very pretty, my little lamb, but I love you a thousand times more than them all.”

She then began to dress herself very rapidly, and as she moved about the room the lamb made an effort to follow her, but seemed unable to walk, and dropped upon the floor.

Jennie rang the bell violently, which so

startled Mrs. Melville that she sprang from the table and rushed up stairs, where she found Jennie seated on the floor, half-dressed, with her lamb in her lap, examining, with streaming eyes and trembling hands, to find out if either of his legs was broken, and crying as if her heart would break.

“What is the matter, Jennie?” asked her mother, as she seized a large shawl and enveloped her in it; and taking up into her lap both the child and the lamb, she repeated her question—

“What is the matter, my darling?”

“Oh, mother!” sobbed out the child, “my precious little lamb is going to die, and I do love him so much! Please do something for him; won’t you, mother?”

“Yes, my child, if I can: but, Jennie, what makes you think he is going to die? what is the matter with him?”

“I don’t know what is the matter, but he cannot walk. Put him down, mother, and see if he can stand alone.”

Mrs. Melville did so, and found that the lamb indeed could not stand alone.

She took him up again into her lap, and said—

“I am afraid, Jennie, that something serious is the matter with him. I will send for Robin and see if he cannot do something for him; perhaps he may be able to cure him. But do not cry so, my darling; your pet may not die; but Jennie, if he should, you know it will be God who takes him from you, and that He would not do it if it was not right.”

“Yes, mother, I know, and believe that; but,” added she, after a pause, “it will be so hard to give him up; I do love him so much.”

“Yes, my dear,” answered her mother, “but God sometimes thinks it best to take away those very things which we love most.”

A pang shot through her heart, and she sighed deeply as she looked at her weeping child, and thought—

“There is a lamb more precious far than this, whom I will soon be called upon to surrender, and over whom I will

have to take up her own childish lamentation: It is so hard to give her up; I do love her so much!"

She repressed her fast gathering tears, and telling Jennie she feared very much that she would take violent cold, Mrs. Melville made Bessie seat herself in her chair, and take the lamb in her lap; and sending Fanny down stairs for Robin, she herself finished dressing Jennie.

Robin came up. He shook his head despondingly, said he did not know what was the matter, but would see if he could not do something for him.

So saying, he took up the little sufferer and carrying him tenderly down stairs, proceeded to try upon him his skill in the healing art.

After Jennie was dressed, her mother and Bessie returned to their unfinished breakfast; and after her devotions were finished, Jennie herself joined them in the dining-room. Upon her cheeks were still the traces of her recent tears, and her eyes were red with weeping, but on her face there rested a sweet expression

of calm and peaceful resignation as she said—

“Mother, I am satisfied now!”

“Why, my darling, has Robin already succeeded in relieving your little pet?”

“I do not know, mother, but I did not mean that when I said I was satisfied. I asked God, in my prayer just now, please not to let my lamb die; but if He thought it best, and my little pet must die, please to help me to be willing: and, mother,” she added, with touching simplicity, and striving to keep back the tears which were again filling her eyes, “I shall be satisfied now, either way.”

Her mother looked at her earnest and tearful face, and thought—

“In my child’s grief I have had a fore-taste of the heavy sorrow which is hanging over me; from her may I also learn the lesson of child-like submission and loving trust.”

She then replied aloud—

“I sincerely trust, my daughter, that our fears with regard to the lamb are groundless, and that he will prove not so seriously

injured as we suppose ; but in either event, I am truly thankful that you acquiesce so entirely in God's will with reference to him. It is a precious consolation, my child, in every trouble, whether great or small, to rest upon the conviction that 'He doeth all things well.'"

Here Bessie came in with a request that she might spend this, the first day of her Christmas holidays, with her friend Susie Danvers. To this her mother readily assented ; and as soon as she had gone, Mrs. Melville asked Jennie if she remembered the promise she had made to Aunt Sally on Saturday.

Jennie replied in the affirmative, and then her mother said—

" Well, my dear, if I comply with my promise, it is necessary that I should go out at once and purchase the books, so that Robin may have time to go to the plantation and return before night. I think it is too cold for you to go with me ; have you any objection to staying here alone while I am gone ? I shall be absent only a little while."

"No, mother; I can go into the kitchen and see what uncle Robin is doing to my lamb, and I can help to nurse him."

As soon as her mother was gone she ran out into the kitchen, but Robin did not at all approve of her staying there to assist him. He said it would hurt her feelings to see him apply some rather painful remedies, which, though severe at the moment, seemed thus far to be successful, and comforting her with the assurance that he thought the lamb might be cured after all, he begged her to go back into the house, which she accordingly did. As she went in, it occurred to her that she would amuse herself by taking a more minute survey of the little apartment, whose beauties she had but glanced at before, but one thought of her little sufferer made her turn away with a feeling of distaste and weariness from even the very thought of her playthings. At length she decided that she would sit down quietly by the fire in the dining-room and read a favorite book of hers, whose pages she had already so often perused, that she was perfectly

familiar with every incident. She had, however, conceived a peculiar affection for one little girl in it, and never tired reading about her, so she seated herself in her rocking-chair, and was soon as deeply absorbed in reading her book as though she were perusing for the first time its touching and interesting incidents.

She had been thus occupied about half an hour when the hall-bell rang, and she heard Mr. Kennedy's cheerful voice inquire for her mother. She sprang up and ran out to meet him, and asked him if he could not spare the time to pay her a visit, saying, although she was a little girl, yet she loved to see him and talk to him.

The minister readily complied with her request, for among all his parishioners there was not one for whom he felt a stronger affection or for whose character he had a more fervent admiration, than for this simple-hearted child. He had often remarked that she was to him a living commentary upon the text, "Except ye become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven;" and he said

that she was the little child whom, of all he had ever known, he would most love to resemble.

He conversed with her very pleasantly about herself and her amusements; inquired particularly about her pet, and really sympathized in what was to her as heavy a trial as is a severe affliction to many an older person, and, like Mrs. Melville, he silently wondered at the spirit of submissive resignation which she manifested. This naturally led him to speak of the only comfort which we can ever find in trouble, of whatever kind or degree, and Jennie opened her whole heart to him without any reserve.

She loved her pastor, and felt none of that mysterious dread and shrinking fear of him with which too many children regard their minister. In his intercourse with all the young among his parishioners, he had studiously avoided every thing like forbidding austerity or reserve. He always had some pleasant word and an affectionate smile for every child of his acquaintance. He was always unaffectedly

delighted when he saw them happy, and never thought their childish griefs too insignificant for his notice and sympathy.

Jennie had been taught to regard Mr. Kennedy as her religious instructor. She took it for granted, that it was his pleasure, as well as his business, to enlighten her ignorance and remove her difficulties, and she never hesitated or shrank from acquainting him with either.

She now repeated to him the substance of the conversation that had occurred between herself and her mother the day before, with reference to the Holy Communion; made known to him her own wishes, and desired from him a confirmation of what her mother had told her, that if she had the characteristics of a worthy communicant, as laid down in the Prayer Book, he would think her as much entitled to a participation in this ordinance as the oldest member of the Church. He told her this was all perfectly true, and he was then about to explain to her the characteristics of a faithful communicant, but in a few minutes he perceived, to his sur-

prise, that no explanation was needed, for they were all as clearly comprehended by her mind as his own. He was very much struck in the course of his conversation by her sincerity, and by the deep, fervent piety which she unconsciously betrayed; and when he gladdened her heart by telling her she need not be afraid to come to the Holy Communion, and that the Saviour, so far from rejecting her because she was a little child, would only welcome her the more affectionately and guard her the more lovingly on that very account; he felt assured that he had never, in all his ministry, invited to that sacred feast one who evinced a temper better calculated to draw down its richest blessings.

While they were conversing, Mrs. Melville returned with a good-sized Bible and Prayer Book for Aunt Sally. She inquired immediately whether Robin had been successful in his efforts to relieve the lamb, and when Jennie told her the result of her own attempt to assist him, she herself went out to the kitchen, and in a few minutes returned, carrying the little patient in

her arms. He was much better, and though not yet able to walk, he could stand alone, and Robin thought, that by repeated applications of the stimulating lotion which he had been using, he would, after a while, regain perfectly the use of his limb.

Mrs. Melville asked if she could not apply this as well as he could, to which he answered—

“Certainly, ma’am, if it will not hurt your feelings to see the little fellow suffer, for it is very severe when you first put it on.”

“Ah, Robin!” she sadly replied, “I have learned to look at sufferings, those, too, which no affection could assuage, no remedies alleviate, and I certainly can nerve myself now to see this little creature suffer, especially as I have the hope that he can be permanently relieved. I will attend to him, and I wish you immediately to get a horse, and take these books to the plantation, and give them to Aunt Sally. I promised to send them to-day, and you must go at

once, otherwise you cannot get back before night."

He went out to obey his mistress's commands, and Mrs. Melville was proceeding to tie up the books very carefully, when Jennie asked—

"Have you forgotten, mother, that you promised to turn down a leaf, and put a pencil-mark at a place which you wanted her to spell out first?"

"Yes, my dear, I should have forgotten it entirely if you had not reminded me of it. Get me a pencil, Jennie."

Mr. Kennedy handed one to her, and Mrs. Melville marked the Apostles' Creed, and folded down a corner of the leaf. Jennie looked over, and when her mother had finished, she said—

"Mother, can I not turn down a leaf too?"

"Certainly, my dear," and so saying, Mrs. Melville handed her the book and pencil.

The child resumed her chair by Mr. Kennedy, and turning to the Litany, folded down the whole leaf, and the min-

ister watched her with surprise as she marked the petition—

“That it may please thee to give us an heart to love and fear thee, and diligently to live after thy commandments.”

She then turned over the page, and still true to her affection for the name Lamb, as applied to the Saviour, she made, with peculiar emphasis, a cross mark at the last petition—

“O Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us.”

She closed the book and gave it to her mother, who now tied it with the Bible, and laid them down to wait for Robin. In a few minutes he came in, and as Mrs. Melville gave him the package, Jennie said—

“Uncle Robin, you must tell aunt Sally that Jennie turned down the whole leaf in the Prayer Book, and say to her, that if she will spell out those two or three pages, she will find a prayer for every thing she ever can want while she lives in this world. Tell her that verses taken from the Bible are scattered all through

the book, and all the hymns are in the back part of it. Can you remember all this, Uncle Robin? Mother would write it down, but that would be of no use, for Aunt Sally could not read it."

"Yes, Miss Jennie, I think I can remember all that without any trouble," and he turned and went out, saying, in an under tone—

"This must be a great book, indeed, to have so many different things in it."

Mr. Kennedy then told Mrs. Melville what he and Jennie had been conversing about, and that he had assured her she would be a welcome guest at the Communion Table. Mrs. Melville was very much gratified with the result of their interview, not that she had entertained any doubts about it herself, for she well knew that the minister could not fail to be at once satisfied with regard to the child's fitness for this solemn ordinance, but Jennie, herself, seemed to have so many misgivings, and so much to dread lest her tender age should prove an insurmountable obstacle, that the mother now felt very much relieved to find that

all her fears were removed and her heart at rest.

As Mr. Kennedy rose to go, he remembered that he expected the bishop would arrive by the next Communion season, and the Holy Sacrament and the rite of Confirmation would be administered on the same Sunday morning.

After he was gone, Jennie said—

“Mother, I wish you would explain to me the meaning and the uses of Confirmation. I always feel very solemn when I see the bishop lay his hands so affectionately on the heads of the kneeling persons, and hear him offer up so fervently over every one that little short prayer; but then I do not precisely understand the meaning of the word Confirmation, and I do not exactly know the use of it.”

“Well, Jennie, before we begin to talk about it we will take the Prayer Book—you get the little one out of my work-basket, and I will take the large one from the stand.”

So saying, Mrs. Melville brought the large book, and laying it upon her lap,

she turned to "The Order of Confirmation, or Laying on of Hands."

"If you will read, Jennie," said she, "a portion of the preface, which the rubric requires shall always be read whenever the rite is administered, you will find that it sets forth plainly and distinctly the object and the benefits of Confirmation, and you will scarcely require any explanation from your mother to enable you to understand them. Glance your eye down until you see the words, 'To the end that children, &c.,' and then let us hear what is said."

Jennie looked until she saw the sentence to which her mother alluded, and then read—

"' To the end, that children, being now come to the years of discretion, and having learned what their Godfathers and Godmothers promised for them in Baptism, may, themselves, with their own mouth and consent, openly before the Church, ratify and confirm the same; and also promise, that by the grace of God, they will evermore endeavor themselves faithfully to

observe such things as they, by their own confession, have assented unto.'"

"Do you understand this, Jennie?"

"Not exactly, mother."

"Well, my dear, I will try and see if I can make it plain. When you were baptized, who made the promises, you or I?"

"You did, mother, because I was too small to know any thing about it."

"Now, Jennie, I took you to the church, and in the presence of God and of the congregation, I made all those promises for you. Now does it not seem reasonable and right that when you grow old enough to keep these promises for yourself, and are willing to do it, you should go to the same place, and again, in the presence of God and of the congregation, say, that you think you are just as much bound to keep the vows made for you by your mother as if you had uttered them with your own mouth, and that, by God's grace assisting you, you intend to do it? Do you not think this seems right and proper, my daughter?"

"Yes, mother, I certainly do," said the child.

"Well, my dear, this is Confirmation. Confirm means to strengthen, to make good; and when you are confirmed you will, in your own name, and on your own behalf, make good the promises which I made for you in your baptism. The bishop then asks all who come to be confirmed, if they will renew the promises which either they themselves have made or others have made for them; and if they will acknowledge themselves bound to believe and to do all that was promised for them. To this each one shall answer, 'audibly,' as the rubric says, 'I do.' Now, Jennie, if you recollect the conversation we had several days ago upon the baptismal covenant, you will remember that these promises were very solemn, and very comprehensive; that they included every thing which a Christian ought to do: and inasmuch as we are utterly unable by ourselves, and in our own unassisted strength, to fulfil these vows, the bishop is taught to say, 'Our help is in the name of the

Lord : ' thereby reminding all who come to that sacred rite of their own insufficiency, and of the source whence they must seek grace to do what by nature they themselves cannot do. To this the people are to reply, ' Who hath made heaven and earth : ' thereby testifying their assurance that He from whom they seek aid is omnipotent, and able to give them strength and grace in all circumstances and in any measure. Next in order comes a short prayer, and afterwards the bishop goes round, and, laying his hands upon the head of every kneeling suppliant, he offers up for each one, individually, that beautiful, fervent, and touching petition. Read it, my daughter ; it will do me good to hear your childish voice uttering that prayer."

Jennie read slowly, " ' Defend, O Lord, this Thy Child with Thy heavenly grace, that *he* may continue Thine forever, and daily increase in Thy Holy Spirit more and more, until *he* come unto Thy everlasting Kingdom. Amen.' "

" Now, Jennie," said her mother, " if

Confirmation meant nothing else, if its whole benefit consisted solely in having this prayer sincerely offered up for me, specially and individually, I should consider it an invaluable privilege; but it includes a great deal besides this. It is the renewal of the vows made for us in our baptism; the public confession that we consider ourselves bound by them, and intend, by God's grace, to keep them so long as we live. It is the act of giving ourselves over again as it were to God's service; and yet more than this, it is a rite in which a special blessing is given to all who receive it with humble trust and child-like faith. In our conversation upon Baptism you recollect we read in the Prayer Book that one of the promises made by Christ to the little baby was, 'To sanctify him with the Holy Ghost.' Now, Jennie, Confirmation is the time for the Saviour to fulfil this promise. It is true, as I explained to you before, that the Saviour does not wait so long before He blesses the child. From the very moment when the parent, in the act of Baptism, gives his

child up to the Saviour, and promises to train him for his service, Christ blesses that child as his own; but yet neither the child nor the parent can tell precisely what blessings he receives. In Confirmation, however, we may look for special grace at God's hands, grace which was promised to the infant in Baptism, and which I have already reminded you was, 'to sanctify him with the Holy Ghost.' To sanctify, or to make holy, it is true, is not done in a moment, or at any one particular time. The Bible everywhere teaches us that this is a gradual change, and requires time; but yet, in Confirmation we receive some of the influences of the Holy Spirit, and the promise, that if we are faithful in trying to fulfil our duties we shall have these influences to go with us all through life, to help us to resist temptation, to guide us in the right way, and to sustain and comfort us in trials and troubles. So you see, my daughter, that Confirmation is not merely what too many persons regard it—a formal way of coming into the Church; but it is a very solemn rite, and

one of inestimable benefit when it is rightly received."

Just then the lamb, who had been lying very quietly upon a bed of soft wool, prepared by Jennie on the rug, made a little noise, as if tired of remaining so long unnoticed.

Mrs. Melville took him up gently, and as she placed him on her lap, she said, smilingly—

"I am afraid, Jennie, that when Robin returns he will pronounce me a very negligent nurse. He left special directions, you recollect, that I should apply this lotion every half hour, and I have let a whole hour pass without even thinking about it. Bring the bottle here, and let me put it on."

Jennie did as she was requested, and stood holding the bottle while her mother, with great tenderness, applied the contents to the lame foot. He seemed to shrink with great dread from Mrs. Melville's touch, gentle as it was, and looked up so imploringly and piteously into her face, that Jennie's heart was sorely grieved,

and the tears fell rapidly from her eyes, though, as her mother had requested her assistance, she never once thought of avoiding the distressing sight by deserting her post.

After the painful duty was finished, she seated herself in her chair, and taking the lamb in her lap, caressed him most lovingly; and felt amply repaid for all her anxiety and care about him whenever he would give her, as he frequently did, one of his mild, soft glances of affectionate recognition.

CHAPTER VII.

THE intervening weeks before the Bishop's visitation passed rapidly enough with Bessie, who, full of life and health, found a pleasure in the mere possession of existence, and to whom every thing was a source of happiness. But time rolled by wearily with the drooping, though patient, little Jennie, whose remaining strength was perceptibly declining.

The relaxation of the stern, cold fetters of winter, and the approach of the early Southern spring, could not infuse new vigor into her sinking frame; and Mrs. Melville was not conscious she had indulged a hope that her child would ever be any better, until she felt, gnawing into her inmost soul, that feeling of heart-aching disappointment which none can conceive save those who have felt its pang.

Already a sweet foretaste of the ap-

proaching spring was felt in the pleasant sunshine and genial atmosphere of our warm southern February; but the child was sinking daily, and Mrs. Melville could not shut her eyes to the agonizing fact, and she now discovered, for the first time, that like a drowning man grasping a straw, she had clung to the scarce-defined hope that the spring might do for that little invalid what her own sober judgment assured her all earthly means and all human skill were utterly inadequate to effect.

With that strange unwillingness to be considered an invalid, which is so remarkable a characteristic of the disease, Jennie persisted in being dressed every day, and carried down stairs into the dining-room; but when there, her usual place was now the sofa, and her constant companion the little lamb, which had now entirely recovered, and never willingly left her side.

The occasional glow that used sometimes to flush her cheeks, had now deepened into the bright hectic spot; her hands were always feverish, and her pulse bounding with accelerated speed; her

breathing was hurried, and her cough constant. All these things her mother noticed with that feeling of hopeless agony which those only can know who have felt that they would give the universe to save a beloved object, and whose hearts have died within them beneath the crushing conviction that the whole universe could not save it.

At length that Lord's Day dawned to which the child had looked forward for weeks with emotions of mingled desire and fear. Though she had unbounded confidence in both her mother and Mr. Kennedy, yet the encouragement held out by them had not altogether removed her timid dread of presumptuously going to the Holy Communion; and while she ardently desired its blessings, she yet feared lest she might be too young to receive them.

On Saturday evening Mr. Kennedy brought the Bishop to see his little candidate for Confirmation. Shrinking though she was, the excellent man of God found no difficulty whatever in eliciting her desires and feelings. Affectionately and con-

fidingly she told him all her doubts and fears, and gently and tenderly he counselled and encouraged this little lamb of his flock.

As they left the house, he said very seriously—

“I was afraid, Mr. Kennedy, that you might possibly have been rather premature in bringing to the rite of Confirmation so very young a child; but since I have seen her, I really think her old Bishop himself might learn from her a lesson of simple-minded and unquestioning obedience.”

She was now altogether too feeble to go to Sunday school, and the two Church services besides; and as she was particularly anxious to go through them that day without such bodily exhaustion as would prevent her enjoyment of them, she let Bessie go off, after breakfast, without her, and with swimming eyes she said to her mother—

“Mother, I never think it is very hard to lie here, and not be able to run about, until I see Bessie go to Sunday school, and then I think I would give any thing

in the world just to be well enough to go with her once more."

When the time arrived for morning service, Robin came in, and taking Jennie in his arms, accompanied Mrs. Melville. This was now the usual method for her to go to church. Too much debilitated to walk, she yet could not consent to be left at home; and as Mrs. Melville's conscience would not permit her ordinarily to use her carriage on Sunday, and as all her servants constantly attended the church where she worshipped, she had thought of this expedient of gratifying the child.

Robin was devoted to her; and as, Sunday after Sunday, he lifted up her slight frame, and felt that the burden was growing lighter and lighter, his warm, honest heart was sincerely grieved to think that before many weeks should have passed away, he would tread his lonely way to the church with no little Jennie for his arms.

* * * *

The Sunday services were over. Jennie had that morning been confirmed, and had

received the Holy Communion. Other candidates there were for the sacred rite of Confirmation; some in the freshness of youth, some in the vigor of manhood, and one old man in the decrepitude of age, with tottering steps and silvered hair. But for none was there so much affectionate sympathy enlisted, as for the frail child, whom her mother led trembling to the chancel, and whose slight form contrasted strangely with that of the old man, who knelt by her side. When the Bishop laid his hands upon the head of each one, and invoked the blessing, there was, perhaps, a tone of deeper and more impressive fervor, as he implored the heavenly grace for the meek little child kneeling before him; and the deep and fervent and solemn Amen that arose from the congregation, seemed the utterance of full and glowing hearts.

It was now late in the afternoon. Thoroughly exhausted, Jennie was lying upon the sofa, looking languidly out of the window at the setting sun. Upon her face rested a sweet, heavenly expression. She

seemed too much fatigued even to talk; and her mother was sitting by, with her open Bible in her lap, but her thoughts had wandered from its sacred pages, and she was going over again, in imagination, the services of the day, so fraught as they had been with the deepest interest to her maternal heart. At last she awaked from her musing, and looking at the child, said—

“Jennie, what are you thinking about now? I should judge from your countenance that it was something very pleasant.”

“I have been lying here, mother, thinking of all that took place in the church to-day; and just when you spoke to me, I was thinking over the Benediction. I never noticed it particularly before, but this morning it seemed to me, when, after the Communion, the Bishop began to say, ‘The peace of God which passeth all understanding,’ that it was just the feeling of my heart. Peace! that was the very word, mother, and it did ‘pass all understanding,’ because, until I felt it, I could not know any thing about it.”

"Yes, my child," replied her mother, "there has always been, to my mind, something peculiarly beautiful in the parting benediction with which the Church dismisses her children after her solemn services are over; and I have sometimes thought that if I should walk there, and hear not a word except this, I should be amply repaid for going. It is no small, no common blessing which the minister implores upon his people when he says—

"The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord: and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be amongst you, and remain with you always.'

"It is a very beautiful and a very comprehensive petition, and one whose words of blessing fall very sweetly and soothingly upon our ears, as we are leaving that 'Holy Temple' in which we have met our heavenly Father, and where we have talked with him, 'as a man talketh with his friend.'"

After a little while, Jennie said—

“Mother, do you not think it is very strange that we hear these things so often, and yet they make no impression upon us. Now I have heard that benediction twice every Sunday of my life, since I have been old enough to go to church, and yet I never thought about it before to-day. But I wonder that it did not always seem to me as beautiful as it does now. Oh, mother, you do not know how quiet I felt while I was listening to it.”

Mrs. Melville fully comprehended all that was intended to be conveyed by the word “quiet,” for she had herself experienced that feeling of holy calm and serenity, which comes so soothingly upon the soul in the words of this benediction, and she was forcibly struck by the word employed by Jennie to describe her feelings.

“I have often,” she replied, “wondered myself at our insensibility to the beauty and power of that Liturgy which seems to open new wonders to my mind every time I use it. There is no want of our poor, fallen nature, which has not a petition for

its relief; and no blessing received, which has not a thanksgiving. There is but one thing, Jennie, which I would like to see added to the Prayer Book."

Jennie opened her eyes wide with astonishment, for she had been taught to think that the Prayer Book, like the Bible, ought not to be altered; so she replied—

"Why, mother! I did not know anybody could improve the Prayer Book. I thought it was perfect!"

Mrs. Melville smiled at Jennie's unquestioning confidence in the standards of the Church, and replied—

"Nevertheless, my child, there is one thing I would like to see added, and that is a special thanksgiving for the possession of this incomparable book, and although, in the General Thanksgiving, we gratefully acknowledge this among all our other blessings, yet it seems to me that I would love, at the close of every service, to thank God publicly with the congregation, for the unspeakable blessing vouchsafed to us in the possession of such a book and such a Liturgy."

Just then, Mr. Kennedy and the Bishop called in to see Jennie, for they feared the effects of all the excitement she had undergone upon her feeble frame. She was delighted at the affectionate interest thus manifested towards her by the Bishop, and she could not understand how a gray-headed man could be willing to sit down and talk so patiently to a little child like herself. She already loved him, and did not feel that she was a stranger to him, and after having talked with him freely and unreservedly of all her emotions during the day, she showed him her little lamb, which was nestled close beside her upon the sofa, and told him what a pet it was with her, and how much company it was for her, as she had to lie there all the long wearisome day.

As they were leaving, she told Mr. Kennedy how much she longed for a little playmate, and asked him if he could not so arrange it that Willie might spend every afternoon with her. To this the kind minister readily agreed, and as he taught his little boy at home, he altered his ar-

rangement so as to give all his instruction in the morning, and leave the afternoon for amusement and recreation. Willie was perfectly delighted with this plan. He was never happier than when he was with Jennie, and he was so gentle in his disposition, that his society was peculiarly agreeable to her, and her pale face would light up as with a sunbeam, whenever she heard the little boy's firm, rapid step, and saw his bright, happy face looking in at the door. Even the lamb began to divide his affection between the two children, and though he would firmly resist the efforts of any one else to remove him from his accustomed place by Jennie's side, yet he would go very quietly to Willie, and submit very patiently to his boyish caresses.

Thus the days passed on more pleasantly for Jennie than could have been expected. Mrs. Melville was obliged to see that her child was becoming more feeble and languid every day; yet she never complained, and if questioned about herself would always reply, "I am very well; only I am tired."

Every morning, after the sun grew bright and warm, Robin came round with the carriage, and Jennie and her mother went out to breathe a little fresh air; but every few days the words, "I am tired, mother," would shorten the ride, until, at last, they were rarely gone from home more than half an hour.

Mrs. Melville never talked to her child about dying. She felt perfectly satisfied that she was ready to meet the summons at a moment's warning; and she determined not to harass her mind, and embitter the brief remnant of her life, by a shrinking dread of those fearful struggles which are always associated in the mind with the idea of dying. She frequently talked to her of heaven; indeed, it was her principal theme of conversation; and she tried to bring down its attractions to Jennie's comprehension, and make her ardently desire to be there: and the child talked constantly of going to heaven as she would of visiting some pleasant place, without seeming at all to remember that in order to reach that blessed home she

must first cross the cold and chilling stream of death.

Thus passed the days and weeks—slowly, heavily, sorrowfully to the anxious and distressed mother ; calmly and placidly with the dying child ; mirthfully and happily with the light-hearted Bessie, who never dreamed that Jennie could be very sick so long as she could be dressed and brought down stairs.

One evening about sunset, Mrs. Melville, Jennie, and Willie Kennedy were all in their usual places; Jennie was propped up on pillows, with her lamb lying quietly in her lap. A little table was before her, and on it lay the pieces of a dissected map, and she and Willie were displaying their geographical knowledge, and at the same time amusing themselves, by trying to put it together. While they were thus employed, Bessie rushed into the room, and, throwing down her bonnet and satchel, exclaimed, impatiently—

“Oh, I am so sorry they are taking them down! They are just as bright and green as they ever were, and the church

will look so bare and ugly without them."

"What are you talking about, Bessie?" inquired her mother.

"About the wreaths, mother. As I came by the church just now I saw the pavements covered with evergreens which they had pulled down, and I thought it was a pity to throw them away while they looked so fresh. I think I would have waited, if I had been Mr. Kennedy, until they had turned brown and ugly before I took them down, wouldn't you, mother?"

"Bessie," replied her mother, "do you not know, my child, the reason why they are to-day stripping the church of all its Christmas decorations?"

"No, mother, I do not. As we came along Mary Granville asked me why they were doing it, and if we had any particular time to keep the church dressed. At first I thought I would tell her, 'Yes; that the Prayer Book told us how long we must let the wreaths hang up;' but then I remembered the great mistake I made the other day, and was afraid to tell her anything, because I thought that, perhaps,

this time I might not even find it in the Bible as I happened to do before. So I told her 'I did not know, but I would ask you and tell her all about it day after to-morrow, when I go back to school.'"

"I am very glad, my dear, that you were wise enough not to hazard this reply, for I do not think you would have found in the contents of either the Bible or the Prayer Book any time specified for taking down wreaths. But are you not going to school to-morrow, Bessie?"

"No, mother," replied she, in great surprise. "Don't you know we never go to school on Ash-Wednesday?"

"What is Ash-Wednesday, my daughter?"

"It is the first day of Lent, mother."

"And what is Lent?"

Bessie thought a little while, and then, shaking her head doubtfully, she replied, with some hesitation—

"It is a time, mother, when Mr. Kennedy has service oftener than at any other time; and Episcopalians do not give parties, and do not go to them; and the last

week they have service every day ; and—”

“ Oh, Bessie ! stop, stop, my dear child,” exclaimed her mother, most beseechingly. “ If this is indeed all you know about the season of Lent, and its uses, I am truly glad that you did not undertake to enlighten Mary Granville with reference to the removal of the evergreens, which is always preparatory to the commencement of this great Fast of the Church. Now, my child, we will talk a little about Lent, and I think you will find that the Church has some definite object to be attained by all her usages, and that there is a wise reason even for taking down the Christmas decorations at a particular time. You know, Bessie, why they were put up, in the first place ? ”

“ Yes, mother : as signs of rejoicing on Jesus Christ’s birth-day.”

“ Now, my child, the season of Lent, the great Fast of the Christian Church, has been kept ever since the days of the Apostles, by whom the foundations of the Church were laid. It is a time specially set apart for recalling our many sins, and all the

reproach and shame and bodily pain which the Saviour endured, as the punishment of those sins, during his sojourn on earth. Now, Bessie, does it not seem peculiarly appropriate, that all the signs of Christmas rejoicings should be removed before we enter upon that sad and solemn season."

"Yes, mother, I think it does; and this, then, is the reason why the wreaths are all taken down to-day, because we are done rejoicing at Christ's birth, and begin to feel sorry for his sufferings and death, and for our sins which made him suffer and die. Is that it, mother?"

"Yes, my child, precisely so. Do you know, Bessie, how long Lent lasts?"

Bessie reflected a moment, and then shook her head, saying—

"It lasts a long time, mother, but I do not know exactly how long."

"Forty days, Bessie," said Mrs. Melville.

"Forty days!" repeated she, in astonishment. "That is truly a long time. Did the early Christians have any reason, mother, for making it last so long?"

"I think, Bessie, that for this, as well as

for every other custom of the Church, we may find some reason in Scripture. Go to the Bible, and let us see if we can find there a record of any other fast that lasted forty days."

Bessie went to the large Bible, and opening it, turned to her mother, awaiting directions where to look.

"Turn, my daughter, to the fourth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, and read to me the first and second verses."

Bessie found the place without any delay, and read—

"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterward an hungered."

"I suppose, my dear," said Mrs. Melville, "that it was the example of our Saviour which determined the early Church to prolong this great solemn fast to forty days. However, there are two other instances recorded in the Bible, which, although I do not think they have any direct bearing upon our season of Lent, are

yet worth noticing. Look first at the ninth chapter of the Book of Deuteronomy, and read to me the last clause of the ninth verse."

Bessie was not so familiar with the Old, as with the New Testament; so she had to look a little while before she found the place; but at last she succeeded, and read aloud—

“I abode in the mount forty days and forty nights; I neither did eat bread nor drink water.”

“Who is this person who is speaking here? Look at the preceding verses, and see if you can find out.”

Bessie looked diligently up and down the page, but could find no name that could throw any light upon the subject; so she replied—

“I do not know, mother, who it is; the Bible does not tell.”

“Oh, yes, it does, my child. Turn back to the fifth chapter of this same book, and perhaps the first verse will inform you.”

The child did as she was directed, and read aloud—

“‘ And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day.’”

“So, then, Bessie, you see it was Moses who was speaking. The chapters of this book, from the fifth through the twenty-sixth, contain an address which he made to the children of Israel, just before they entered into the land of Canaan. In this address he reminds them of all God’s mercies to them while they were wandering in the wilderness, and of all their rebellion and ingratitude; and among other things, he recalls to them the time when he went up into the mountain to receive the Ten Commandments, and fasted forty days and forty nights. Now look at the eighth verse of the nineteenth chapter of First Kings.”

Bessie found the place, and read—

“‘ And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights.’”

“Who was this, mother?” asked she.

“It was the prophet Elijah, who was fleeing for his life from the wicked Queen

Jezebel. He was wandering alone in the wilderness, wearied with his journey, faint from want of food, and sad and dispirited, because he seemed to have no friend to protect and help him. At last he sank down from exhaustion, and fell asleep under the shade of a juniper tree, whose branches protected him from the glaring sunlight. From this slumber he was awakened by the touch of an angel, who said, 'Arise, and eat.' Bewildered and amazed, he opened his eyes, and there he saw a nice little cake of bread and a refreshing draught of water. Eagerly and gratefully did he eat the food thus miraculously supplied; and the sacred historian simply adds, 'He went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights:' that is, that God not only enabled him to do without food all that time, but also preserved him from the faintness and exhaustion which are the invariable consequences of long abstinence. So you see, my daughter, that the Church has for her fast of forty days three examples in Holy Scripture, though I suppose she was most influ-

enced by the example of Him who is her great Exemplar and her Corner-stone."

"But, mother," said Bessie, after a few moments of silent reflection, "these three cases were all miracles. Does God work a miracle every Lent, to help you to go without eating all that time?"

"No, my dear, not by any means. The days of miracles are over, and as no one can go without eating for forty days unless God miraculously preserve his life, the Church, always reasonable in her demands, only requires that we shall use such abstinence as is perfectly consistent with the preservation of our health and strength, and if, during this sacred season, Christians are particularly engaged in bewailing their sins, and in thinking upon their Saviour's sufferings, it is scarcely probable they will have any disposition for those amusements, employments, or entertainments, which, although they may not be sinful in themselves, would nevertheless draw off their thoughts from that subject which this season is particularly designed to keep before

their minds. This will account for the custom which you seem to have noticed among Episcopalian, but for which you could not give any reason, and which you mentioned as a characteristic of Lent—‘that they do not give parties or go to them,’ by which I suppose you meant that they abstain as much as possible from all amusements and innocent gatherings which are calculated to disturb the serenity of their minds. Heads of families, too, make it a Christian duty to arrange their household matters so that they will have as few pressing duties as possible to attend to, that they may have calm and quiet hearts for the frequent services of the sanctuary, and more time than usual for the daily duties of reading, meditation, and prayer. The truly humble and pious Episcopalian wishes to have nothing during these sacred forty days to draw off his heart from a constant and thankful remembrance of his suffering Saviour.”

“Mother,” said Bessie, as she looked up earnestly into her face, “I thought Christians ought, all the time, to keep in re-

membrance their suffering Saviour. I did not know it was right to forget him any more at one time than at another."

" And it is not, my darling," replied her mother; " but since the Church was made for people as they are, and not as they ought to be, and since it is one of the peculiar frailties of our fallen nature that a duty which may be performed at any time is very apt never to be done at all, the Church has very wisely set apart a special season to recall to our minds the sufferings of our Saviour, and to remind us not only that He did suffer, but how, and when, and where. Fearing, too, that if this duty be left to be performed by each individual Christian in his devotions at home, it may still be neglected, she summons her children more frequently than usual to her sacred courts, and appoints to be publicly read to the congregation the inspired record of all that He endured for us. So that you see, Bessie, even the most slothful, and negligent, and indifferent Christian is obliged to have the Saviour's sufferings brought vividly before his mind, and if

he has any heart at all, he cannot fail to be touched and melted by the remembrance of them. This division of time into the Ecclesiastical Year, as it is called, is, I think, the wisest and most beautiful provision of the Church. By this arrangement, the great and leading events of our Saviour's life, from the gladsome rejoicings of the Nativity on Christmas, to the solemn and soul-subduing services of Good Friday, all are brought distinctly and in their regular order before the mind, and in such a way that the most careless attendant upon her public worship is obliged to become familiar with the history of Our Blessed Redecmer. I know from experience how beneficial this arrangement is, and although I acknowledge that I ought to think of these things without waiting to have them recalled by the Church services, yet I must confess, that very many times I find myself so engrossed in worldly employments, or perplexed by worldly cares, or weighed down by worldly troubles, that all other thoughts and feelings are crowded out of my mind until the gentle voice of the Church arouses me

from my lethargy, and her services in Advent, on Christmas, during Lent, on Good Friday, Easter, Whit-Sunday, or Trinity Sunday, bring so plainly to my contemplation some great event in my Saviour's life, or some cardinal doctrine which He taught, that I cannot, if I would, refuse to give it my attention. But to return to the subject of our conversation. What did you say the first day of Lent is called?"

"Ash-Wednesday," replied the child.

"This is rather a singular name, do you not think so, Bessie? Can you tell why this name was given to it?"

"No, mother, I cannot."

"Because, Bessie, on this day the early Christians used to throw ashes over their heads as a sign of humiliation and sorrow: hence the name Ash-Wednesday. This was a custom prevalent among the Jews whenever they had any very great grief to bear, whether it were a national calamity or a private sorrow; and we frequently read in the Old Testament of persons mourning in sackcloth and ashes. And as

during the season of Lent, the Christians were to contemplate the sufferings of Christ, "they spent its first day in these outward demonstrations of sorrow for all their sins, the weight of whose punishment He bore. What do we call the last week of Lent?"

"Passion Week," replied Bessie.

"And this, my child, means Suffering Week; for although it would seem that the innocent Saviour's cup of sorrow had been before full to overflowing, yet, during this week of his sinless life, He had to bear a weight of agony from which even his patient and uncomplaining spirit seemed to shrink with unutterable dread. It was during this week that He was scourged, and mocked, and insulted by his enemies; denied by one disciple, sold by another, deserted by all. It was during this week that he was crucified; and, as the climax of his anguish while dying upon the cross, He was denied the blessed comfort which those very agonies have secured to the humblest Christians—the light of the Father's reconciling coun-

nance to illuminate the dark valley of the shadow of death. Truly the Church has well named this Passion or Suffering Week! The sad, solemn services of Good Friday—called good, because those sufferings so terrible to Him were our highest good, inasmuch as they purchased heaven for us; the calm, holy services of the next day, or Easter Even, as it is called in the Prayer Book, when his torn and lacerated frame rested quietly in the sweet repose of the grave; these conclude the week, and leave the heart subdued and ready when the joyous light of Easter or the resurrection morning dawns to sing away all its sadness in the exulting chant which the Church puts into the mouth of all her children:

“‘Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.

“‘Christ being risen from the dead dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over Him.

“‘For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.’”

Mrs. Melville's countenance glowed with

earnestness, for she was trying to impart to her little girl somewhat of her own appreciation of the inestimable privileges of Passion Week. She paused a moment, and then added—

“Bessie, my child, I honestly believe that an affectionate, devoted Christian will be more humbled, and softened, and comforted by the services of Passion Week than by the Church privileges of all the rest of the year besides.”

* * * * *

ASH-WEDNESDAY: and Mrs. Melville and her children were among the most attentive and interested worshippers in the little village church. The conversation of the preceding evening had made a deep impression on Bessie, and she understood and appreciated the privileges of the day, and realized, as she had never done before, its solemnity. Jennie went to church as usual in Robin's arms. When the minister's voice was heard in that impressive sentence designed to commence the public services, “The Lord is in his holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before

him," Jennie arose with the congregation; but, before the Exhortation was concluded, her wearied limbs refused to sustain her little frame, and she sank exhausted upon her seat. For the first time in her life, she sat throughout the whole service, having strength neither to stand nor kneel. Long before she could read, or understand what was going on, she had been taught that it was her imperative duty to stand, sit, and kneel with the other worshippers, as a manifestation of reverence for the God who was worshipped there; and her inability to do it on that day was a great grief to her, and prevented her, as she afterwards complained to her mother, from enjoying the services as she would otherwise have done.

Little did she think, as she feebly tottered along to the door, half supported by her mother, that it was the last time she would ever cross that sacred threshold; that when she worshipped with a congregation again, it would be in that blessed world

"Where congregations ne'er break up,
And Sabbaths have no end."

CHAPTER VIII.

LENT was gone, and a sad, sad Lent it had been to Mrs. Melville. Easter, with its solemn though exulting rejoicings was over; and Jennie and her mother had participated in the public solemnities, of neither the festival nor the fast. For the last two weeks she had been every morning "too tired" to be dressed and carried down stairs, but thought she would be "well enough by to-morrow;" but the morrow never brought the anticipated strength, and day by day she languished and faded. Her pet lamb was always on the couch close by her side; and she had now grown too feeble for any of her childish pleasures, except caressing this little favorite. Willie Kennedy still came regularly every afternoon; but his merry, ringing laugh was now never heard; and saddened and subdued, he scarcely knew

why, he moved about with noiseless step, or spoke in a low, soft tone. Even the noisy, rushing Bessie had learned, intuitively as it were, to move about quietly ; and "not to make a noise" seemed her constant motto, and the climax of all her efforts. As soon as Aunt Sally heard that her little pet was confined to her bed, she sent a petition to Mrs. Melville that she might be allowed to come up and assist in nursing her ; to which her mistress assented with the utmost readiness, especially when Jennie expressed a great desire that her mother would grant the old woman's request. Aunt Sally could not live without a rocking-chair, and was while in it in perpetual motion ; so Mrs. Melville very thoughtfully provided this luxury for her, and she herself had a chair by the head of Jennie's couch, while the faithful old nurse would sit and rock herself at the foot of it from morning until night.

The afternoon of the day after Easter, Willie came as usual, and mounting on the couch by Jennie, which was now his accustomed place, he showed her, one by

one, some beautiful Easter eggs, which his mother had dyed and sent to her. Her languid eyes brightened for an instant as she looked at them, for any change from the monotony of the sick chamber was pleasant; but she very soon grew tired of them, and handed them to her mother to put away for her. Willie had exhausted all his own, and his father's and mother's ingenuity in constantly devising something to amuse Jennie, and to relieve as much as possible the tedium of the long weary days. He brought flowers, arranged in every possible way; sometimes in a large, handsome vase; sometimes in long, beautiful garlands; then in wreaths or tiny bouquets. He had ransacked his father's library, and brought over all the picture-books he could find; and would sit down by the hour when Jennie seemed interested in looking at them, and explain each engraving, without ever seeming to grow weary of the task. Mrs. Melville would sometimes look on with astonishment as this unselfish child would try every possible expedient to amuse the little sufferer;

and as each in succession failed, would devise something else, without weariness or apparent disappointment. He evinced neither surprise nor mortification when Jennie grew so soon tired of the eggs, which he had fondly hoped would please her a little longer than they had done; and turning to the lamb, and patting him on the head, he commenced talking about him; for when every thing else failed, he had hitherto found an infallible resource in this. Jennie could always be interested in any thing that related to this little creature, around which her ardent childish affections seemed to have so strongly entwined. She now looked at him as he was lavishing his caresses upon her favorite, and said—

“Willie, I think I must ask mother to give you my lamb when I go to heaven; for I believe you love him almost, though not quite, as well as I do.”

At first a bright gleam of pleasure glistened in Willie’s eye, but it was only for a moment; and then hastily brushing away with his hand what he considered an un-

manly display of feeling, his voice trembled a little as he replied—

“I love the lamb very much, Jennie; but I do not want him for my own, if I can only have him by your going to heaven, and leaving him for me. I would a great deal rather you would stay here, and keep him yourself, for I love you, Jennie, a great deal better than I love the lamb.”

“I know that, Willie,” replied she; “but whenever I do go, would you not like for me to give him to you? Then, when you look at him, you will think about me, and you cannot forget me, then, Willie.”

Willie’s assumed manliness all deserted him now, and the tears coursed each other rapidly down his cheeks, as he said—

“I do not want any thing, Jennie, to keep me from forgetting you; I never can forget you as long as I live.”

Mrs. Melville was as much overcome as the little boy; while Aunt Sally, with the tears rolling from her eyes, muttered to

herself as she rocked backwards and forwards—

“That child is obliged to die. No child ever yet talked that way, and lived.”

“Mother,” said Jennie, “after I am gone to heaven, will you not give Willie my lamb?”

Mrs. Melville would sooner than Jennie had asked any thing of her than that. Next to her child, it seemed to her that she loved her child’s pet; and it had often occurred to her what a solace and comfort that lamb would be to her, when all that should be left of the child who had loved it so devotedly would be a little grassy mound in the village graveyard. But then she remembered Willie’s tender affection for Jennie, his untiring and persevering efforts to beguile the tedious hours, his relinquishment of all his boyish sports and amusements for the confinement of a sick chamber; all these things added to the request of her dying child, the mother’s heart could not withstand; and so she promised that Willie should have the lamb.

The conversation was dropped, and all relapsed into a silence which none seemed disposed to break. Willie felt too sad to talk, while Jennie was too feeble; and as every thing was so quiet, she soon fell asleep. Willie sat perfectly still by her side, afraid almost to breathe, lest he might awaken her, and she slept sweetly for about half an hour. As she opened her eyes, she smiled faintly as she said—

“Willie, I do not think it was very polite for me to go to sleep, and leave you sitting here by me; but you must excuse me; I was so tired, I could not keep awake.”

It was now almost dark, and Willie said he would have to run very fast to get home before night; and as he told her good-bye, Jennie said—

“Willie, please ask your father to come and see me to-morrow. I wish to ask a favor of him.”

Willie promised to do so, and as he went out of the room, Mrs. Melville asked—

“What is it, my dear, you wish Mr. Kennedy to do for you?”

Jennie replied to her mother's question by asking another.

"Mother, isn't there a service in the Prayer Book that was made for sick persons?"

"Yes, my child, it is called 'The Order for the Visitation of the Sick.'"

"And is there not another for giving the Holy Communion to the Sick?"

"Yes, Jennie."

"Well, mother, I want Mr. Kennedy to read the service for the sick to me. It will be almost like going to church, won't it, mother? and I have not been for such a long time, and it may be so long before I am able to go again, that I would rather not wait any longer, but have a little church at home; do you not think it will be pleasant, mother? I expect Mrs. Kennedy and Willie will come: and they, and you, and Bessie, and Aunt Sally, and I, and my lamb, that will be a real little congregation, won't it?"

"Yes, my daughter, I should like it very much indeed; but I am almost afraid, my darling, that it will fatigue you very much."

"O no, mother! it cannot do that, because you know I will be still, just as I do all the time. I do not think I will be tired; I think I will like it very much, and it will do me good. And, besides, mother, I want to ask Mr. Kennedy if it will be too much trouble, or if he thinks I am too small a child to have the Holy Communion at home. Yesterday was Easter, and that is always Communion day; but you and I could not go to Church. I hope Mr. Kennedy will not refuse, for I should like to feel quiet and peaceful as I did before. Mother, perhaps it will make me more patient and more willing to lie here all the time, if it is God's will."

Mrs. Melville could not imagine that her little girl could be more patient and uncomplaining than she was, but she was well assured that the child would receive some blessing in the sacrament, and she was very anxious that her wishes should be gratified. She told her she had no doubt but that Mr. Kennedy would most gladly comply with her request, and assured her

that he would do it as willingly for her, although she was a little child, as he would for the oldest member of his church.

Prompt to respond to the case of his little parishioner, Mr. Kennedy came early the next morning. When he entered the room, Mrs. Melville and Jennie greeted him very cordially, and the former said—

“I am glad you have come, Mr. Kennedy. I have been reading and trying to explain to Jennie some portion of the Visitation Office, but I think you can do it a great deal better than I can.”

The minister, without saying a word in reply, drew from his pocket a little Prayer Book, and kneeling by Jennie’s couch, read with great solemnity and feeling that petition from the Litany with which the Visitation Office begins:

“Remember not, Lord, our iniquities, nor the iniquities of our forefathers; spare us, good Lord, spare thy people whom thou hast redeemed with thy most precious blood, and be not angry with us for ever.”

And fervently and earnestly did the voices of both mother and child blend in the response—

“Spare us, good Lord.”

The service was continued through the prayers, and when they arose from their knees, Mr. Kennedy took his seat by Jennie, and proceeded to read very slowly and distinctly the Exhortation appointed by the Prayer Book. There was nothing in this which the child could not easily comprehend, and he did not pause until he came to that sentence, “Render unto him humble thanks for his fatherly visitation;” and then he said—

“Now, Jennie, the Church here teaches you not only to submit patiently and uncomplainingly to all the bodily pain and languor which God has sent upon you, but also to thank him for it as a blessing; for, although neither you nor I can see why He has thus afflicted you, still we must have confidence enough in him to believe that He has in it some design which could not be accomplished in any other way. We must believe that He is much more

unwilling to see you suffer than even your mother is, and that He never would have sent this sickness upon you if any thing else would have answered his purpose. Now, my child, are you ready, as the Prayer Book says, 'to render him thanks for his fatherly visitation?'"

She did not reply immediately, for she wanted to answer truthfully; but after a few moments' reflection she said, with the utmost ingenuousness—

"I do not think, Mr. Kennedy, I can quite say that. I know it is right for God to make me sick, and I believe I am willing to lie here just as long as it is his will, but I always thought this was all He required of me, and never knew before that I ought to thank him for sending to me pain and weakness. I do thank him always when I feel a little better, but when I have a coughing spell and feel so tired and worn out, I just try to be patient, and that is all. But I will ask him to help me to be thankful for being sick, and then, Mr. Kennedy, when I can really feel so well you not come and administer the

Holy Communion to mother, and Aunt Sally, and to me?"

"Certainly I will, my dear child," replied he, "and I believe, Jennie, it will be more solemn, and impressive, and comforting to us all, to receive that holy sacrament here in your sick chamber, than it would be even in the sanctuary. And shall I not bring Mrs. Kennedy and Willie with me, and let us have a little congregation to worship with you?"

"Yes, sir," replied she, "I should like that very much."

"Jennie," said the minister, "I wish to see if I cannot make you understand perfectly what the Prayer Book means by that sentence which we have just been talking about. I do not think, my child, that it is the teaching either of the Bible, or of the Church, that we should be thankful for the mere bodily pain; for that would be directly against our nature, inasmuch as God has made us to shrink instinctively from suffering. But we must believe that through this suffering, God designs to give us some blessing which He

could not give us in any other way; and although it may be that we cannot now see what that blessing is, yet we must have faith or trust enough in him to thank him for it, before we know exactly what it is: and when we reach heaven, and He shows it to us, we will pour out our gratitude in thanksgiving and praise for those very things which in this world we considered our heaviest afflictions, and which cost us the bitterest tears and the most heart-breaking grief. Now, Jennie, have I explained it so that you can understand it, and can you thank God, not for the bodily pain, but for that unknown blessing which is concealed under your feebleness and suffering?"

"I am almost afraid, Mr. Kennedy, to say that I can until I think more about it; but I will ask God to help me and to teach me, and I hope when you come again, that I will be able to say with truth that I do thank him for 'his fatherly visitation.'"

"Well, my child, I sincerely hope you will. I always remember you, Jennie, in my prayers, and ask a special blessing upon

the little lamb of my flock; but to-day I shall unite my petition with yours, that God will enable you, by his grace, to have this frame of mind. Would you not like for me to come every morning and read the Visitation Office for you?"

"Oh, yes, sir! that I would," replied she, "if it would not be too much trouble. I know I would feel a great deal better if I could join in these prayers every day."

"It will be no trouble, my child; it will be my greatest pleasure, and I know that I will be quite as much benefited and comforted as you will be. What time shall I come, Jennie?"

She smiled, as she replied—

"I am very lazy, Mr. Kennedy, and love to sleep in the morning; and I do not think I will ever be ready for you before eleven o'clock."

"Well, my child, suit yourself with regard to the hour, and I will make my arrangements accordingly."

The minister, after a few moments' silence, knelt down and offered up the prayer for a sick child; and afterwards

laying his hand gently upon Jennie's head, he pronounced over her that benediction which the Prayer Book has incorporated into the Visitation Office, and which is among the most beautiful and touching passages within the lids of the sacred volume, the benediction with which God himself taught Moses to bless his own chosen people :

“ Unto God’s gracious mercy and protection we commit thee. The Lord bless thee and keep thee. The Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace, both now and evermore. Amen.”

True to his appointment, Mr. Kennedy came the next morning precisely at eleven o’clock; and with him, his wife and his two children, Willie and little Mary, who was about four years old.

Mrs. Melville had taken Bessie from school as soon as Jennie had become too feeble to sit up; so she was now at home to form one of the little congregation. It was a solemn and impressive scene.

Jennie was propped up by pillows, and her pale wan face lighted up with pleasure as, with her Prayer Book in her hand, she either responded audibly, or followed with her eye, while the minister read. Beside the usual service for the sick, he used the portion of the Psalter appointed for the morning, and then they sang a hymn. After all was concluded, and they had taken their seats, Jennie said—

“I have thought a great deal, Mr. Kennedy, about what you said to me yesterday. Mother and I talked it all over after you went away; and we both prayed that God would help me to be thankful for his fatherly visitation, and this morning I really do feel so. Did you not tell me that when I could truly say this, you would administer the Holy Communion to me?”

“Yes, my dear, and I will do so, whenever you wish it.”

“I should like it to-morrow,” replied the child, “and I want Mrs. Kennedy, and Willie, and little Mary, all to come again,”

added she, turning and looking at Mrs. Kennedy.

"Certainly we will, Jennie," said she, "and I shall account it a very great privilege; one that I would not lose for a great deal."

When they were about leaving, Jennie petitioned for Willie to be allowed to stay; but to this his father would not consent, inasmuch as he had yet some of his lessons to recite. He promised, however, that he should return immediately after he had had his dinner.

As they left the house, Mrs. Kennedy remarked to her husband—

"That child will not linger much longer. She is fearfully changed in the last few days, and seems to me to be sinking rapidly. But I never saw upon any countenance such an expression of peaceful and trustful resignation."

"Yes," Mr. Kennedy sadly replied, "little Jennie is almost gone; but it is a blessed and comforting thought, that although the fold of the earthly Church will lose its loveliest lamb, yet the heavenly

fold will have another added to its pure and stainless flock."

After they were gone, there was for some minutes an unbroken silence in Jennie's room. Aunt Sally rocked quietly, and Bessie sat unmoved in her chair, with her head resting upon her hand, in an attitude of reflection, which she very seldom assumed.

At last Jennie spoke—

"Mother, did you not say that I might spend my gold pieces in any way I pleased?"

"Yes, my child, certainly you may. They are your own, and of course you have a right to dispose of them in any way you please. How many have you, Jennie, and how are you going to appropriate them?"

"I have ten little gold dollars, mother, and I want to buy something to put in the Church. The large Prayer Book which lies on the reading-desk, begins to look old, and I thought if I had enough I would buy a new one to put in its place."

"Well, my darling, you can do so, if

you wish it. I should think ten dollars ought to purchase a very handsome book; but if it is not enough, I will supply the deficiency, and you shall have it."

"Will you go and get it for me, mother?"

"Yes, Jennie, if you are willing for me to leave you so long. When do you want it?"

"Now, mother," replied she, with that eagerness manifested by all children to have at once what they are to have at all.

The indulgent mother, without an objection, immediately put on her bonnet, and charging Aunt Sally and Bessie to take good care of her child while she was gone, walked very rapidly down to the bookstore, purchased a large, elegant Prayer Book, and returned in about half an hour.

When she saw the bright expression of pleasure that lighted up Jennie's little pale face, as she heartily thanked her, Mrs. Melville felt that she would have been compensated for any great personal sacrifice, and she was truly thankful that she

was enabled so easily to gratify her precious invalid.

Jennie was perfectly delighted with the book, and smiled as she said—

“Now, mother, I want you to do something else for me.”

“Well, my child, I am ready to do any thing that will give you pleasure.”

“I want you, mother, to get the pen and ink, and write on this blank leaf—

“FOR THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY COMMUNION,

FROM

LITTLE JENNIE.”

“No, Jennie,” said the mother; “I will get the pen and ink, but you must write the words yourself.”

“Why, mother!” replied the child, in astonishment, “you know I never could write well enough to write in a book; and now my hand trembles so, that I should entirely spoil this elegant book, and that would be a great pity.”

“Never mind, my dear. Mr. Kennedy and I, and all the members of the Church,

would rather have your own little handwriting, even if it is not very elegantly done. I complied with your request, my daughter; will you not grant mine?"

"Yes, mother, if you do not think it will spoil my beautiful book; but I would be very sorry to do that."

Mrs. Melville raised her up, and sitting down behind her, supported her, while Bessie stood by holding the ink-stand. Jennie had the Prayer Book open upon her lap, and with a feeble, trembling hand, she traced the letters, and when she had finished, she said, looking at it—

"There, mother, I have done. It looks very badly, but it was the best I could do."

"It will do very well, my child; and I will tell you, for your gratification, that I think the book is now worth twice as much as it was before you wrote in it."

"I am glad you think so, mother. Please to take it now, and put it carefully away, and send it to the church before Sunday, without saying any thing to Mr. Kennedy or any one else about it."

Mrs. Melville immediately called Robin,

and giving it into his charge, requested him to go at once and quietly place it on the reading-desk in the church.

Willie came soon after, and the afternoon passed as usual, except that Mrs. Melville noticed that her child seemed more languid, and so very feeble as scarcely to be able to utter a sentence, without entire exhaustion. When night came, she grew restless, and was unable to sleep; and when at last she sank into an uneasy slumber, her breathing was so short and hurried that Mrs. Melville became seriously alarmed, and spent the long weary hours watching by her couch, with a feeling of agonizing suspense and dread. Towards morning, however, she seemed to sleep more quietly; and the mother's fears being momentarily allayed, she threw herself upon the bed, and snatched a few moments' repose between the intervals of starting up, to satisfy herself that the little slumberer had not already sunk into that "sleep which knows no waking."

CHAPTER IX.

MORNING dawned: a balmy April morning, whose soft air was fragrant with the breath of spring flowers, and vocal with the music of joyous birds. It was late when Jennie awoke, and although she had seemed for several hours to sleep sweetly and deeply, yet she was not at all refreshed, but said, in a very touching and plaintive tone—

“Mother, I am very, very tired; more so, I believe, than I ever was before in all my life.”

“Well, my darling,” replied her mother, “try and go to sleep again, and perhaps after that you will feel better. You were so restless, and slept so little last night, that I am not at all surprised you should feel very feeble this morning.”

“What time is it, mother?”

“Almost eleven, Jennie.”

"Oh! then, mother, I have not time to go to sleep any more. You must make haste and get me ready, for Mr. Kennedy will be here directly."

"No, my dear," said Mrs. Melville. "Mr. Kennedy can come at any time; and I will send him word that you are too feeble for the service this morning. I hope you will be stronger to-morrow, and better able to enjoy it."

"No, mother, I am not willing to put it off. I never get any stronger now, but grow weaker and weaker every day; and perhaps to-morrow I may be entirely too sick to receive the Holy Communion. So please, mother, do not send to Mr. Kennedy and tell him not to come."

"Very well, my daughter; but I am sadly afraid the service will entirely exhaust all your remaining strength."

Jennie was usually supported by pillows every morning, while her mother combed those long beautiful curls which were the pride of Mrs. Melville's heart. But she was now too feeble for this, and while her mother was gently brushing her hair from

her face, as she lay upon her pillow, she quietly dropped asleep.

Mrs. Melville left Aunt Sally, who, statue-like, seemed never to leave her rocking-chair by the couch to watch the sleeping child; and going herself down stairs, gave orders that when Mr. Kennedy came, he should be told that Jennie was asleep, and that he would be sent for as soon as she awoke.

Two long, weary hours Mrs. Melville passed in silent watching, and at last Jennie stirred, and murmured, between sleeping and waking, some words, which were at first inaudible; but soon the quick ear of the anxious mother caught the sound, and as she bent over her, she heard distinctly the words: "Therefore, with angels and archangels."

She looked round at Aunt Sally, who nodded her head, and said in a low tone—

"Yes, she is dreaming about heaven, and I think she will soon be there."

And then, as Jennie opened her eyes with a startled expression, the old woman said—

"Jennie, what have you been dreaming about? Angels?"

"Yes, Aunt Sally," she replied slowly, and with difficulty, but with her countenance brightening up; "I have had a sweet dream about hearing the most beautiful music, and I tried for a long time to find out what it was; and just as I awoke, I remembered it was a sweet chant in the Communion Service that begins: 'Therefore, with angels and archangels.' Oh! it was sweet, beautiful music," she added, while her face glowed with animation; and her voice, wearied with the unusual exertion of saying so much at once, died away into a whisper.

She waited a few moments, and then suddenly asked—

"Mother, has Mr. Kennedy been here?"

"I presume so, my child. It is almost one o'clock, and, you recollect, you asked him to come at eleven; but as soon as you fell asleep, I went down and gave orders that when he came he should not be admitted, but should be told that I would send for him when you awoke. However,

I think now that you had better wait until the afternoon ; don't you ?”

“ Yes, mother, perhaps it would be best.”

She relapsed into silence, and seemed for some time to be lost in thought. Then she said, as if thinking aloud—

“ I wish I could hear it just once more ! I wonder if they would not come and sing it for me ; it would make me so happy.”

“ What is it, Jennie ?” asked Mrs. Melville.

“ I was wondering, mother,” answered she, speaking with great difficulty, and pausing after almost every word to take breath, “ if Miss Morton and Miss Jennings would not come here and sing that beautiful chant for me. Do you think it would be asking too great a favor to send for them to come this afternoon with Mr. Kennedy ?”

“ No, my child,” said her mother. “ I dare say they would take great pleasure in gratifying you. Shall I write them a note, and ask them ?”

“ Yes, mother, if you please. I will be so glad if they will come.”

Mrs. Melville sat down, and writing a note to the young ladies, made known her child's request; and received in reply, an assurance that they would very gladly comply with her wishes, and would be there punctually at the appointed time. She had purposely named a late hour in the afternoon, hoping that as the day advanced, her child might rally a little from the unusual depression and exhaustion into which she had sunk.

It was almost sunset when that little congregation were silently and solemnly assembled in that sick chamber. Jennie's eyes were strangely bright; but the hectic glow which generally burned upon her cheek, had given way to an almost unearthly pallor. Upon Mrs. Melville's countenance were plainly traced the furrows which months of anxious care and ceaseless watching had made; and even Bessie's thoughtless gayety seemed awed and subdued, and an expression of undefined terror rested upon her face.

The solemn services began. No sound, not even Jennie's usually incessant cough,

interrupted the silence; unbroken, save by the minister's voice, until they came to the General Confession, and perhaps never was that confession poured out by hearts more subdued and fervent.

As is always the custom, the minister alone stood, while all the others, on their bended knees, chanted the Trisagion. Sweetly did the trembling tones of Miss Morton's musical voice fill that dying chamber as she chanted the recitative; and when at the word "Holy," the deep notes of Mr. Kennedy's bass, and the rich tones of Miss Jennings' contralto, blended into one volume of harmony, a convulsive sob from poor little heart-broken Bessie, mingled the wail of earthly sorrow with the triumphant music of the heavenly hosts.

The last sounds died away into deep and solemn stillness, and as Mr. Kennedy turned to kneel and offer up the beautiful and touching prayer which immediately follows, a glance at the countenance of Jennie caused him to utter an exclamation which made them all start from their knees in terror and alarm.

The little sufferer was indeed gone! Her spirit was wafted to its heavenly home upon the sweet strains of that glorious chant; and while the voices of friends around her dying bed trembled with heart-breaking sorrow, she was already in that blessed world whose music no discord shall ever mar, and with whose notes of harmony no tone of sorrow shall ever blend!

Upon the countenance of the child was no expression of deep repose; it was one of ecstatic rapture; not only as if her ear had caught an echo of the music of heaven, or her eye had been permitted to catch a glimpse of its glories, but as if every sense and every faculty of her whole being had been allowed, even before her spirit fled, a transporting foretaste of its future unrevealed bliss!

Mrs. Melville was completely stunned. She knew her child must die, and that very speedily, but she little dreamed when that morning sun arose, that ere its course should be run, her precious sufferer would be safely housed in that blessed home

where languor and disease should be forever unknown. She gazed with tearless eyes upon that radiant face, so pale and still. There was no sign of a struggle there: there was nothing of death except its stillness, and, bewildered and amazed, the stricken mother knelt by the form of her lifeless child in an attitude of helpless and hopeless despair.

Poor little Bessie was perfectly frantic. She screamed and sobbed until the whole house re-echoed with her piteous cries; and though she was immediately removed from the chamber of the dead, still the sounds of her violent grief penetrated even there.

At length Mr. Kennedy's voice broke the silence, as he said—

“We came here to receive the Holy Communion with a dying child, but Christ had said to her, though we knew it not—‘Thou shalt not henceforth drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with thee in my Father's kingdom;’ and in that Father's kingdom she now is, enjoying all the blessings of

her Saviour's presence. We came to chant for her an anthem of praise in earthly music, and even while we sung, her voice was blended with the angel-choirs in chanting the melodies of heaven! 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord: even so saith the Spirit; for they rest from their labors.'"

* * * * *

The next morning, at his family devotions, Mr. Kennedy read the forty-third chapter of Genesis, which contains that most touching lamentation of the aged Patriarch—"If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved." His heart was filled with sorrow, and there was something peculiarly sad and subdued in the tones of his voice as he read that verse. Little Willie listened attentively. His childish heart was full too, full almost to bursting; and although he did not exactly understand the meaning of the words, yet there was something in his father's tone and manner which caused the tears to rush to his eyes and course each other rapidly down his cheeks. After the exercises were

over, and the family had dispersed, he went to his father and asked sadly—

“Father, what is the meaning of bereaved?”

“We say we are bereaved, my son, when we are very heavily afflicted by the loss of some object which we loved with peculiar affection.”

The father was just going to give an illustration of the meaning of the word by applying it to Mrs. Melville’s family, when Willie, with brimming eyes and choking voice, said—

“Father, am I bereaved? for I did love little Jennie Melville very dearly.”

“Yes, my son,” replied the minister, touched to his very heart, “you are bereaved, so am I, so is the Church, which has lost its loveliest little Christian, but most of all, my boy, is her poor mother bereaved;” and then he added, as if speaking to himself, “Poor Mrs. Melville! from my very soul I do pity her!”

Willie turned and went away: when the family were assembled at the breakfast-table, he was not there, and did not

come until they had nearly finished their meal. When he entered the room, his mother said—

“Why, Willie, my son, where have you been?”

To this the little boy only replied—

“I have been busy, mother.” And he looked so sad, that the mother could not find it in her heart to reprove him for his tardiness.

About an hour afterwards, Mrs. Kennedy was sitting in the dining-room with little Mary in her lap. She was passing her hand abstractedly through the child’s curls, and thinking about Mrs. Melville, when Willie’s voice, close by her side, aroused her from her reverie, as he said—

“Please do it for me, mother. I have been trying ever since breakfast, and I cannot do it any better than this.”

“What is it, my son?” asked the mother.

He handed her a purely white rose-bud, and two gernanium leaves tied together by a piece of white ribbon, on one end of which she saw an attempt at writing. Un-

skilled at any time in the use of the pen, Willie's trembling hand and tearful eyes had now succeeded much worse than usual, and the mother found some difficulty in deciphering the words written in a child's unsteady hand, and then blotted over as if by a falling tear. With some effort she read—

“I am bereaved. Willie Kennedy.”

Mrs. Kennedy's heart swelled, as she asked—

“What do you wish me to do with it, my son?”

“I want you, mother, to get another nice piece of ribbon, and write these same words on one end of it, and tie it on my little bouquet.”

“And then, my child, what will you do with it?”

“I want you, mother, to go with me to Mrs. Melville's, and let me put it in little Jennie's hand.”

“Why, Willie,” said his mother, “it will not do her any good; she will never know it is there.”

“I know that, mother, but I'll know it

is there, and it will do me good. Won't you go, mother?"

"Certainly, my child, if it will gratify you; but, Willie, I would rather not take off that piece of ribbon. It is true, it does not look so neatly as it would if I were to write the words; but I would rather you should let it stay just as it is."

"Well, mother, I am willing if you think it will do; but I was afraid, it was so blotted, that Mrs. Melville would not let it stay in Jennie's hand."

"Who told you to do this, my son?" asked Mrs. Kennedy, after a moment's silence.

"Nobody, mother," replied he. "You know father read this morning about Jacob being bereaved; I thought the word sounded very sorrowful, although I did not know the meaning of it; so after you were all gone out, I asked what it meant, and father told me. Then I knew I was bereaved, and I thought I would feel better if I could tell Jennie so, although, mother, I do not want you to think that I supposed she would know it."

At first I took a piece of paper, and made a little note, and wrote it down, to put in her hand, but afterwards I thought of this plan, and liked it better. Don't you, mother?"

"Yes, my son, I like this better than a note, and think it will be a very appropriate tribute of affection to your lovely little playmate. Get your hat, and I will go with you now."

Little Mary petitioned to go along, and as Mrs. Kennedy thought it a suitable opportunity for impressing a solemn lesson upon her infant mind, she consented.

The child was bewildered by the appearance of the lovely dead. Following Willie's example, she too wanted, as she said, "to kiss Jennie," but when her lips touched that cold white brow, a shudder passed through her frame, and she recoiled in terror, and clung to her mother with convulsive grasp as long as they remained in the room. Willie placed the bouquet in Jennie's hand, and silently and sadly they turned away.

Some time after they had left the house

on their return home, little Mary thoughtfully asked—

“Mamma, what are they going to do with Jennie now?”

“Put her in the grave, my darling.”

“What is the grave, mamma?”

“It is a deep narrow hole in the ground, Mary, where they will lay her beautiful little body, and then cover it up with earth.”

The child shuddered again, as she exclaimed—

“Oh, mamma! I am so sorry for poor Jennie!” and then relapsed into a silence which continued unbroken until they reached home.

About two hours afterwards, little Mary came into the room where her mother was sitting, with about half a dozen bulbous roots in her apron, and commenced amusing herself by rolling them over the floor. Attracted by the noise, her mother looked up from her book and said—

“Why, Mary, what have you there?”

"Some little balls, mamma, which I picked up in the garden."

"Why, my child," said Mrs. Kennedy, "they are hyacinth roots; some, I presume, which James threw aside last fall, when he was transplanting and arranging them. Don't bruise them, Mary; if you plant them they will grow up next spring, and bear sweet beautiful white hyacinths."

"How must I plant them, mamma?"

"Just dig a hole in the ground, and put the roots in, and cover them up with earth again."

Mrs. Kennedy resumed her reading, but found she could not concentrate her thoughts, so she laid her book down in her lap, and was soon so deeply absorbed in her own mournful reflections, that she had entirely forgotten the presence of the child. Mary had ceased rolling her balls, as she called them, and was now seated quietly upon the floor, examining them with careful minuteness.

At last she looked up and said, her face beaming as if with a bright thought—

“Mamma, won’t Jennie make a pretty hyacinth?”

Her mother raised her eyes, and asked—

“What are you talking about, Mary?”

“Why, mamma, you said they were going to plant Jennie, and if these ugly things in my lap will grow up to be such beautiful hyacinths as you say they will, I should think Jennie would grow up to be a great deal prettier one, for I am sure she is a great deal prettier now.”

“Why, Mary,” said her mother, much surprised, “I never said anybody was going to plant Jennie.”

“You said, mamma, that to plant any thing, was to dig a hole and put it in, and cover it with dirt; and when I asked you what they were going to do with Jennie, you told me they would put her in a hole in the ground, and cover her up. So they must be going to plant her.”

Mrs. Kennedy now laid aside her book, and taking her little child in her lap, she pursued the analogy which had voluntarily suggested itself to her infant mind, and talked to her long and earnestly about the

resurrection of the dead, and told her that Jennie's body, after it was raised, would as far exceed in loveliness that little form (beautiful as it was) which she had seen in the morning, as the purely white and fragrant hyacinth exceeded in beauty the unsightly root which she held in her hand.

CHAPTER X.

MRS. MELVILLE could not be contented anywhere except by the couch on which lay her child in her calm, deep sleep. She was in no haste to "bury her dead out of her sight," but she clung with all the tenacity of a mother's love to that lifeless form, and would rather have her child dead than not to have her at all. For hours she had shed no tear, and had tried in vain to realize the blow which had fallen with such stunning force upon her heart. Strangely unmoved, she had gazed upon that pale, lovely face, had touched that marble brow, and had endeavored in every possible way to make herself believe that Jennie was really dead ; but when, in spite of all these evidences, she could not feel, she wandered almost frantic from room to room, believing that she must either have lost her reason, or be utterly destitute of

human feeling. At last, she went back again to the parlor. As she quietly opened the door, she saw Aunt Sally sitting in her rocking-chair, close beside the couch, and she heard the words indistinctly muttered, "Yes, I do bless thy holy name, for all thy servants departed this life in thy faith and fear; and I know this child was one of them."

Good old Aunt Sally! Not only had she spelt out the Creed and the Litany, as recommended by her mistress, and by the gentle child whose purified spirit had even before her own reached that blessed home to which the Prayer Book is a guiding star, but the old woman had learned, in the language of the Communion Office, to thank her God for taking the child there, and for the lovely example she had left behind.

Mrs. Melville approached the couch, and there, nestled close beside her who had loved him so tenderly, sat the little lamb, faithful to the last! And there, too, in her hand, was Willie's bouquet. The writing on the ribbon attracted Mrs. Mel-

ville's attention, and when she read that touching expression of a child's sorrow, in the words of the old man himself, a child in tenderness and gentleness, the fountain of the mother's tears was unsealed, and they fell like torrents of scalding rain upon that pure and stainless flower.

But at length the time came when Mrs. Melville must give up her child. It was a calm, still Sunday morning, and the preparations for the funeral were all made. Just before the appointed hour, Willie went to take a last farewell look at his little playmate, and then passed quietly about the house, until he found what, next to Jennie herself, he loved for her sake, the pet lamb, whose eyes brightened with pleasure as he recognized his friend. Willie found no difficulty in taking him away, for, during the last few days, he had sadly missed the affectionate care to which he had been so long accustomed; and unnoticed and neglected, he now manifested real gratitude for Willie's attentions and caresses. He took him in his arms, and slowly and sadly proceeded to the church.

He seated himself in a pew, and placed his charge at his feet, where he remained perfectly quiet during all the services. The congregation soon began to assemble, and in a short time the church was crowded. Miss Morton and her class in the Sunday School all wore the badge of mourning for the little scholar and companion ; and each carried in her hand a boquet of white flowers.

At length the little coffin was brought in and placed in front of the chancel ; and, advancing to the reading-desk, Mr. Kennedy's glance rested with surprise upon the elegant new Prayer Book. He opened it, and the tears dimmed his eyes as he read the scarcely legible words, the last that were ever traced by that feeble, trembling hand, now palsied in death, and he thought there could not possibly be a more appropriate memento of her who had been the loveliest ornament of that church, than the simple inscription upon the blank leaf of the book which she had herself given as her farewell remembrancer :

"FOR THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY COMMUNION,

FROM

LITTLE JENNIE."

Mr. Kennedy entered into no labored panegyric upon the dead. The Burial Service, whose matchless sublimity challenges the admiration of all, and a short, solemn, but tenderly affectionate appeal to the young, occupied the hour; and they then proceeded to the grave which was in the churchyard. Willie, his eyes swollen with weeping, carrying the lamb in his arms, followed closely in his father's footsteps, and took his station beside him at the grave. A breathless silence prevailed while they lowered the coffin into its final resting-place; and one by one, Miss Morton and her scholars threw in their beautiful bouquets.

Mr. Kennedy's voice was then heard, in those solemn and expressive passages of Scripture appointed to be read in our hearing, while every thing around us is so well calculated to engrave them indelibly upon our minds. Afterwards came those soul-

thrilling words: "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust;" and the clods fell with that dull, hollow sound which sends through the heart a cold shudder of agony.

Just then, as if to give greater effectiveness to the scene, the little lamb, perfectly quiet until that moment, bleated most piteously, as if mingling his voice of sorrow in the general lamentation for his lost friend. Willie could bear no more, and his tears flowed with renewed violence.

There is something peculiarly contagious in childish grief. Little hearts had been, ere this, full to overflowing; but now, they no longer made any effort to suppress their feelings, and sob after sob answered responsively to each other, until there arose around that little open grave a wail of childish sorrow, which the listening angels heard with sympathy and pity. Mr. Kennedy was thoroughly unmanned. He closed the book for an instant, and his vigorous, manly form shook convulsively with emotion, which he did not strive to subdue. It was, however, only for an instant, and then, with a strong effort, he proceeded

with the service. In a few moments, his clear voice rang out upon the solemn stillness of that sad scene, and its tones trembled just enough to render the effect more thrilling, as he chanted those beautiful and soothing words—

“I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, from henceforth blessed are the dead who die in the Lord; even so saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labors.”

* * * *

It was a long time after little Jennie had been carried away, before Mrs. Melville suddenly remembered she had not seen Bessie for hours, and she immediately went in search of her. She passed all over the house, and looked in every place of her usual resort; but Bessie was nowhere to be found. At last her mother opened the parlor door, and there upon the couch from which her sister had so lately been removed, sat a plaintive little figure, the very sight of which would have melted a heart of stone. The frantic violence of her grief had exhausted itself, and there was

no sign of sorrow, except the position which she had assumed, and an occasional low, deep sob, which seemed the wail of a broken heart. Her curls, which had not received that morning, as usual, the careful attention of Fanny, were now streaming in wild confusion over her shoulders and neck; her face was buried in her lap, and one hand grasped tightly a long ringlet of soft, brown hair, which had once been Jennie's.

Mrs. Melville, herself broken-hearted, had now to become the comforter of the childish mourner; and seating herself beside her, she passed her arm lovingly around her, and drew her up close to her bosom. Bessie's heart was touched more deeply than ever by this demonstration of affection, but she did not cry any more—she had no more tears to shed; so, without looking up at all, she only clung more closely to her mother, and said, in the intervals of her sobs—

“Oh, mother! my heart is so *empty!*” and then she added, with touching repetition, “so very, very empty, mother!”

For this the mother had no reply. Her heart was emphatically empty, too; and weeping bitterly, she could only say—

“And so is mine, my child!”

Mrs. Melville wept long and convulsively, while Bessie shed not a tear; but every few moments she would heave a sigh that seemed to come from the inmost depths of her very soul.

As soon as Mrs. Melville had sufficiently regained her accustomed self-control to be able to speak, she said—

“Bessie, my daughter, do you not know that it is very selfish for you and me to grieve for our precious child? Do you not know, my darling, that Jennie has gone to her Saviour’s home, where pain, and suffering, and death, can never reach her any more?”

“Yes, mother, I know that, and when I remember how happy she is, I forget for a little while how very, very lonely I shall be without her.”

Her lip quivered, and a shudder almost of terror thrilled her frame as she looked up and said, almost in a whisper—

"Mother, do you think you and I killed Jennie?"

Horrified and amazed, the startled mother asked—

"Why, Bessie, what do you mean? Who put such a notion into your head?"

"Mrs. Danvers, mother, told me yesterday, when I was crying so much, that it was very wrong for me to do so, and she said, 'You and I loved Jennie entirely too much, and that was the reason God took her away;' and, mother, I was so frightened to think that perhaps I had killed Jennie, and if I had not loved her so much, God would have let her stay with us, that I have not cried since."

She paused an instant, and then added in a most pleading and apologetic tone—

"I did not know it was wrong to love her; indeed, mother, I could not help it."

At any other time Mrs. Melville would have felt all the indignation of her nature rebel against these cold and heartless teachings and philosophy, not religion, which are so often poured into the stricken mourner's ear, and which had now im-

elled a child of only eight years to the unnatural stoicism of crushing and repressing that outward demonstration of feeling which God himself has mercifully provided as a relief to the overcharged and bursting heart. But now the mother was too sorrowful to be indignant, so she only brushed away the hair from Bessie's glowing and feverish face, and looking sadly into those glazed eyes from which the child had heroically banished every tear, because she had been told it was wrong to shed them, Mrs. Melville said—

“My child, your mother does not believe one word of any such false teaching, for I have never found in the Bible that it is a sin to grieve for our precious dead, if we do it meekly and submissively. We did not love Jennie too much, and if I could, I would have loved her a thousand-fold more than I did. God made her lovely, and gave us hearts to appreciate that loveliness, and warm affections wherewith to cling to her. He did not take her away because we loved her too much, but because He thought it would render hea-

ven more attractive to us, and make us try more earnestly to reach there if He placed our treasure, our precious Jennie there. This, my darling, is the view I take of our sore, our heavy bereavement, and if I did not thus regard it, I do not believe I could bear up under it at all. And as to our hearts being empty, Bessie, as you express it, it is natural they should feel so, but let us both try always to remember that we can love our darling just as much in heaven as if she were still on earth. She is not lost. She has only found a pleasanter home than ours, a more tenderly affectionate guardian and protector than even her mother could ever be, and more ennobling companionship than you and I and all her earthly friends could have furnished her. We must not think that those strong, deep affections which were so closely entwined around her, have now nothing to which they may cling. She is far more worthy of our fervent, undying love than she ever was before, inasmuch as now she is pure, sinless, and undefiled. Love her, my daughter, just as

much, aye more, if you can, than you have ever done, and let that love be only another tie to bind you to our Jennie's and our Saviour's home!"

Soothingly had the mother's words fallen upon Bessie's aching heart, and, like a precious balm, had stilled that wild tumult in her breast, which was as near akin to despair as anything a little child can ever feel. She was inexpressibly comforted by the assurance, that her excessive devotion to her sister had not been the cause of her death; that God was not now visiting her for an idolatry of which she had been wholly unconscious, and that she still might love that sister with all the fervid intensity of her nature. Mrs. Melville was truly relieved to see an expression of calm and quiet resignation take the place of that mysterious and undefined terror which was so plainly written on her child's countenance when she first began to talk to her.

Late in the afternoon, Mrs. Melville led her little girl to the newly-made grave, in which she felt her heart was buried. As

they approached the churchyard gate, Willie came out, and there, planted on that little mound, they saw his first tribute of affectionate remembrance to the quiet sleeper beneath — an evergreen cross wreathed with the Star of Bethlehem, thus blending into one the symbols of the Nativity and Crucifixion.

When they returned home, they found the lamb lying in his accustomed place on the rug, in the dining-room, and then, for the first time, they remembered that they had not seen him before that day, although neither knew, that through Willie's considerate kindness, he too had been permitted to witness the funeral solemnities of the child, who, to the very last moment of her life, loved him with unremitting tenderness.

The next morning, in compliance with Jennie's dying request, Robin was sent with the lamb to Mr. Kennedy's house. A bright blue ribbon was fastened round his neck by a massive silver clasp, on which were engraved the words —

“To WILLIE.

FROM JENNIE.”

* * * * *

A few weeks afterwards, a little marble column was reared by that quiet grave in the village churchyard. On it was carved in relief, a beautiful little lamb at the foot of a cross, and just underneath, was the simple inscription—

LITTLE JENNIE,

April, 1854.

“He shall gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom.”

THE END.

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June 20, 1855



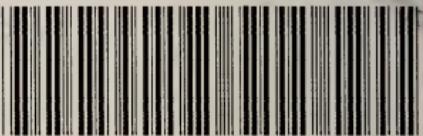
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